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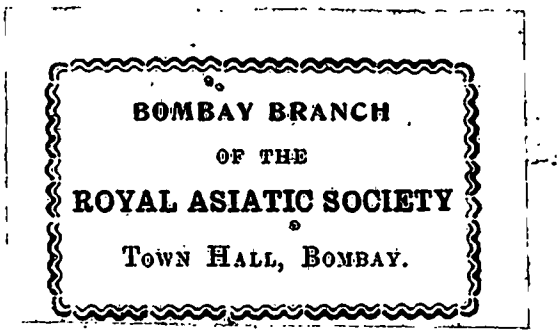

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THE

POLITICAL LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

AN ANALYTICAL BIOGRAPHY.

BY

THOMAS DOUBLEDAY,

AUTHOR OF "THE TRUE LAW OF POPULATION," "FINANCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND," "ESSAY ON MUNDANE MORAL GOVERNMENT," ETC.

"The People cannot see, but they can feel."

James Harrington's Political Aphorisms.

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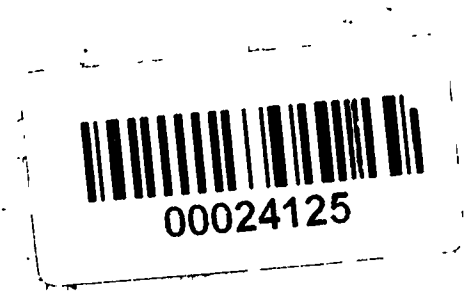

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PREFACE.

In composing the Political Biography of the late Sir Robert Peel, the author has had two ends principally in view. It has been his endeavour, throughout, to relate, as a spectator merely, the various events in which Sir Robert Peel had more or less share. Arrived at that period of life when men are no longer directly affected by political changes whether for good or for evil, he has long ceased to entertain the feelings of a partisan of any line of policy. Hence his inclination has long been to estimate political actions principally by their results in a national point of view; without adverting to party advantages or disadvantages which they may have been the means of achieving or creating. It is in this temper, only, that historical biography—and the biography of a minister of state must be, in the main, a fragment of history—can be written with propriety and advantage; and at this sort of impartiality the author hopes he may be found to have arrived. To errors of judgment, all writers—

however abstracted from the immediate subject of which they treat—must in every case be liable: but from errors of prejudice the cold touch of time, before whose icy breath every human passion becomes quenched, ought ultimately to free us.

In this temper the author trusts the following pages will be found to have been composed. There yet, however, remains another requisite for successful writing in this department of literature, the attainment of which has been the earnest study of the writer of these volumes. That requisite is the knowledge of causes as well as of effects. Merely to chronicle events as they occur and meet the public eye, without adverting to the more deeply seated causes of such events, is only to tell half a tale; and a tale half told is for the most part unintelligible, or, which is still worse, delusive. The annalist who, like the kingfisher, merely skims the surface of events, whether smooth or ruffled, may, like the bird, exhibit to advantage the brilliancy of his own plumage; but to him who can pierce beneath that surface, the full reality and meaning of these events are alone to be known.

During the earlier historical periods of this and other countries of Europe, the springs of events lay, for the most part, nearer the surface than they do

now. Yet, even during these periods, history often fails to penetrate to the more deeply seated causes of the great mutations which it describes. He who ascribes the revolt and success of "the greatest Julius" to the goadings of ambition and the perfection of generalship merely, is as far from the truth as they are who ascribe the Protestant Reformation in England solely to the will of Henry VIII. and his instruments lay and clerical, or the Revolution of A.D. 1640 to the abstract notions of kingly authority entertained by the Stuarts, and to the fanaticism of the Puritans and the other sectarian enemies of the Anglican Church.

Since the year 1793, or rather since the change of dynasty in 1688, this has become a more important truth. During the whole of this period the motives of the actors, in great national changes or undertakings, are to be sought and found far beneath the surface; and he who barely contents himself with recounting events as they occurred, acts like him who deems it enough to record the moves of an automaton chess-player, without having the slightest knowledge of the hidden mechanism by which they were regulated; or like him who is content to contemplate the figurative writing of the ancient Egyptians, and see the actions there repre-

sented, without the slightest comprehension of their real import and meaning.

It has been the aim, therefore, of the author of the following pages to unfold causes as well as effects, and to make his work, as much as possible, a key to the History of England, from 1809 when Sir Robert Peel entered the House of Commons, up to the day of his premature and lamented death. Unless this be done, he has long been convinced that neither historical events, nor the characters of the men whose acts are a part of history, can be appreciated or even understood; and, without such comprehension and appreciation, history amounts to little more than a sort of romance.

In naming his work an Analytical Biography, the author believes he has only rightly designated it; and as such only he ventures to place it in the hands of the public. It has been no wish of his, by means of brilliant but delusive colouring, to exalt party or to varnish character; but rather to show his readers how little statesmen are masters of their own actions, and, by so doing, to moderate the feelings of those who would too deeply blame, as well as of those who would too extravagantly praise them.

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THE

POLITICAL LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HON.

SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

CHAPTER I. (INTRODUCTORY.)

Social State of England before the Rise of Manufactures—Staple Articles of Produce—Manorial Lords and Church opposed—Gradual Growth of Manufactures—At first Handicrafts—Loss of the Crown Revenues under the later Plantagenets—The Tudors vainly attempt to restore the Feudal Tenures—Empson and Dudley sacrificed—The Reformation—Discovery of America—Great Depreciation of the Value of Money—England changed from a Pastoral to an Arable and Mercantile Country—Virginia settled—The Stuarts—The Revolution of 1640 destroys the remaining Feudal Revenue—The Restoration followed by the Revolution of 1688—Wars of William III. and Anne—Effects of the Taxes consequent on them—American Colonies revolt and are lost—Distress caused by these Events—Hargreaves' and Arkwright's Inventions—Mr Peel adopts them—His Son succeeds—Peel and Yates—Peel marries Miss Yates—James Watt's Steam-Engine—Mr Peel made a Baronet by Pitt—Studies and writes on Financial Subjects—The second Sir Robert Peel born in 1788—Is sent to Harrow School—Thence to Oxford—Lord Byron's Account of Him—He becomes a Member of Parliament in 1809.

THE life of a statesman is little else than a compendious history of the period during which he lives. Of his private merits or demerits the world thinks little.

As the lives of soldiers are written in the annals of their exploits, and of authors in their works, so the chief interest of the biography of a great minister of state must rest upon his public acts. His private character is only interesting as it may happen to be in remarkable accord, or at remarkable discord, with his public conduct. It is this principle alone which gives value to such anecdotes as are recorded of the private acts of great politicians, in whom a personal interest is undoubtedly less felt than in the case of other extraordinary men; and this is to be attributed to the magnitude of the events with which their public character is necessarily connected. With respect to these, our feelings do not admit of being modified by mere personal traits, as is the case with other conspicuous persons. As to the work of the great author, or the great painter, our feelings are in some sort modified by what we know of his personal character; and, on the other hand, our views of the private lives of such men are modified by the impressions which their works have produced upon us. But of the character of the great statesman, as of the great soldier, our ideas are formed almost solely from their public acts; and, under the same rigid law, by the success or non-success of these acts they must be ultimately judged by posterity. As of a gigantic statue we look solely at the *tout ensemble*, and pass over the *minutiæ*, so those who guide the course of nations are merged in the great events with which they have to do, and with them are deemed fortunate or unfortunate. The biographers of such men are

made historians by necessity; and he who depicts the career of a minister of state, finds himself at the same moment really the chronicler of a fragment of history.

The family of Peel took its rise contemporaneously with a great change in the manufacturing system of Great Britain, which was destined in its progress to produce also a great change in the domestic relations of the country; the assumed advantages of which have therefore, as is mostly the case with great mutations in the social position of nations, been strongly called in question or denied. For centuries before the era of 1779, when Hargreaves invented that "spinning jenny" which, assisted by Watt's improved steam-engine of 1783, was destined to produce consequences so mighty, England had been a manufacturing as well as commercial country, but her manufactures were in a great degree domestic; and though considerable changes in the social state had silently and gradually taken place during the long period which intervenes between the accession to the throne of the Tudors and of the Hanover family, they still for the most part remained so. Great Britain is by nature a pastoral country; and her earlier annals show that her pursuits partook largely, though by no means altogether, of that character. For the facilities of feeding and breeding cattle her climate is almost unrivalled; and its mean temperature is also such as to render labour of the ordinary kinds less onerous to the labourer than it is under the sunnier skies and warmer breezes of

lower latitudes. Hence it happened that England, under the generally wise sway of the extraordinary family of the Plantagenets, might be with justice described as being one great sheep-walk or stock-farm; immense herds of cattle and sheep forming together with her mineral resources the origin of the food, the clothing, and the trade of her inhabitants. Tillage and horticulture were neglected, and of course little understood. Bread of any kind formed a very minor portion of the diet of these times, and so completely was the science of gardening neglected, that the few vegetables used were in a great part imported from Holland and the Low Countries now known as Belgium, and a few quinces, rasps, currants and cherries, were the only ordinary fruits; the culture of the vine having been discontinued after the importation of foreign wines became extensive, which it was long before the accession of the Tudors, the duty upon it, under the name of "tunnage," forming a large portion of the parliamentary revenue of the Plantagenets.

Under such a state of things, beef, mutton, pork, and sometimes lamb and veal with poultry, formed the staple food of all ranks, and are so described in several of the earlier statutes.* The luxuries of the higher classes were game, including venison (which none under the degree of esquire had the privilege to kill), fish, which then bore high prices, and most of the smaller species of bird down to the lark, which was served up at the tables of the great as a delicacy.

* 5 Henry VIII. cap. 13.

Under this full diet the population, as it always is in such cases, was moderate, so much so as, during portions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to cause great alarm by its visible decrease, and to occasion many statutes which to modern ears are hardly intelligible.*

This moderate population, in conjunction with great natural industry on the part of the people, caused the remuneration of labour to be very high; and after the breaking up of the feudal system, wealth was very much diffused. With wealth grew luxury; and with growing luxury increased the encouragement to foreign trade, for which the staple articles of English produce were admirably adapted. The vast herds of horned cattle and sheep which then existed, gradually enabled England to undersell all other countries then known in coarse wool and leather, with which she supplied Europe, and also gradually with coarser woollen stuffs. To this the iron and copper and coal of Wales, and the tin and copper of Cornwall, enabled her to add hardware, all articles of essential necessity, for which she took in exchange luxuries only, the wines and dried fruits of France and Spain, the glass of Venice and Antwerp, the linens and the laces of Flanders, the fine cloths of Saxony, the porcelain of Sèvres, the Gobelins and Arras tapestry, the salted fish and fresh vegetables and nursery-trees of Holland, and the silks and spices of the East, which were then only sparingly seen in Europe under the maritime enterprise and trading

* 4 Henry VII. cap. 16, 19. 3 Henry VIII. cap. 8. 7 Henry VIII. cap. 1.

spirit of the Venetian Republic. In this state of society, the profits of trade and the wages of labour were very great, whilst the rental and profits of land, which was then held on long leases, and from father to son, did not rise, owing to a variety of causes, in the same proportion.* Hence it happened that, prior to the Tudors and for some time after their accession, the labourers on the land diminished, whilst those employed in the staple trades increased.

But these trades were carried on in all parts of the country, and by individuals. In all the rural towns were numerous tanners and dressers of leather, woolcombers, and, lastly, weavers. From these the merchants took such articles as went for export to the staple ports; and thus a country which up to that period, like Spain at this day, had been without passable roads, owing to the little locomotion of its inhabitants, became possessed of highways and hostelries or inns, which till then were only partially known. In fact, until the country became possessed of a foreign trade, travelling was almost unknown, being nearly confined to the privileged classes. To the great manors many of the inhabitants were attached as serfs of the soil, and had neither the option nor the desire of removing. As the Church, however, acquired property, she found her security depended on the creation of a class of yeomen and smaller landed proprietors, who should be independent of the lords of the manors; and this was only

* 23 Edward III. cap. 1 to 5. 25 Edward III. cap. 1 to 8. 23 Henry VI. cap. 13. 3 Edward IV. cap. 5. 22 Edward IV. cap. 1.

to be done by gradually breaking up, or letting drop into desuetude, the complicated machinery of the feudal system, which unquestionably was mainly done by the devices of the churchmen, who being the only educated class, possessed great power in general legislation as well as in ecclesiastical matters. Still, however, the intercourse between the remoter districts of the country was very limited.

Amongst the duties which the Church took upon herself, in return for the immense landed possessions she was constantly acquiring, was not only to be numbered the relief of the few poor persons then to be found, but also the law of hospitality, under which she undertook to give lodging and refreshment to wayfaring travellers who demanded it. The existence of this obligation through some centuries is a proof of the limited popular intercourse which then existed. It was, in fact, only put an end to by the flagrant abuse of the privilege on the part of the lay nobility, which gave rise to more than one statute; and by the gradual growth of an intercourse with foreign countries, more active than that which existed amongst the inhabitants of England herself.* Domestic trade as at that time managed, occasioned indeed little locomotion. The general comfort in which the lower classes, who were almost untaxed, were enabled to live, precluded the necessity of frequent buying and selling, and the domestic nature of the manufactures, as then carried on, tended also to prevent much loco-

* 9 Edward II. cap. 11. 14 Edward III. cap. 1, 3, 4, 5; and 3 Edward I. cap. 1.

motion. At a time when the people provided themselves with all they wanted for the year by means of one or two fairs, at which not only fat cattle for winter salting, but also clothes, hardware, and implements of all kinds were sold; and when the spinning and weaving were carried on by families, as was the case down to a very recent period, commercial locomotion was comparatively rare. The large landowners alone travelled as a matter of pleasure, passing from one of their residences to another, or visiting each other; and during these progresses, the bishops' palaces, and the monasteries, with which the country was thickly studded, supplied the place of hostelries and inns, until the abuse of the privilege at length rendered legal interference necessary, and even the sheriff of a county was not permitted to demand from the bishop provender for more than seven attendants and their horses.*

In this state of society, three great events, following each other at different periods, but all acting together upon the social position of the country, produced at length an entire change. These events were, first, the expansion of foreign trade from and after the reign of Edward the First, but especially during the reign of Edward the Third. Next, the loss by the crown of its vast hereditary revenues, arising out of the commutation into money-payments of most of the feudal services with which the land was charged, but which fell into desuetude during the confusion of the civil wars which followed the accession of Henry the Sixth,

* 9 Edward II. cap. 11.

and were finally lost by Henry the Eighth prior to the Reformation. And, lastly, the ecclesiastical revolution, which the loss of these revenues by the crown hastened, and which was begun under Henry the Eighth and finished by his successors.

The consequence of the combined action of these three great events was a total though gradual change in the social condition of the entire people, which began to be visible immediately after the commencement of the Reformation of religion in this country; and this change was further hastened by another extraordinary event which followed the period alluded to; that is to say, the great and rapid rise in the prices of everything, caused by the depreciation of money after the discovery of the rich mines of silver and gold in the then new countries of Mexico and Peru. The first of these events produced amongst the people habits of locomotion to which they were before quite unaccustomed; but at the same time it did this, it raised luxurious living (always the habit of the English) amongst all ranks and degrees of men without exception, to a pitch of which at this time it is difficult to form a conception, and by raising, in spite of all attempts at regulation by means of statutes, the rates of wages, gave additional excitement to the growing fondness for luxury which it was the means of introducing.

In the midst of this broke out the civil dissension caused by the rivalry between the two houses of York and of Lancaster and their adherents, which in time, amongst other consequences, totally dilapidated the

fiscal resources of the kingdom, and at the same time put the power over the House of Commons into the hands of a limited portion of the population, by restricting the franchise of the shires to those only who possessed a clear income from freehold land of forty shillings per annum, at that time no inconsiderable sum, and depending upon a tenure at that time not common.

Up to this time the strength of the kingdom, fiscally considered, resided chiefly in the services upon condition of which under the feudal system all lands were held. The crown lands, at that period of great extent and value, were sufficient for the maintenance of the crown and a large portion of the peace establishment of the kingdom. Taxation, therefore, was hardly known by the people at large, the indirect taxation consisting principally of a small customs-duty on all foreign wines brought into the realm, under the name of "tunnage," and on dry goods imported, which was levied under the name of "poundage." In cases of war, the extraordinary expenditure was borne altogether by real property, which under the feudal tenures contributed in various ways to the military force as it then existed, besides furnishing certain additions, in time of peace, to the crown revenues. The civil wars of the Roses, and the limitation of the parliamentary franchise, concurrently enabled the holders of land to get rid of a great portion of these charges, and ultimately to throw them upon the public at large. The means were obvious. A disputed title and internal hostilities gave a ready excuse for evading the

services that were commuted into money-payments; and of these irregularities such parliaments as were assembled, being now entirely influenced by the great holders of land, omitted to take any efficient notice. The monarchs who immediately succeeded found their tenure of power too precarious to permit them to enforce these payments; and the consequence was, that, when the Earl of Richmond, as Henry the Seventh, at last, by marrying the heiress of York, consolidated the succession, he found the exchequer empty, and the ancient resources of the kingdom almost vanished. By a wise and vigorous exertion of his legal rights, he for a time restored these sources of revenue; but this exercise of a power now become hateful to the landed aristocracy, and indeed to most holders of land, his son, succeeding to the crown at an early age, did not venture to continue; and out of this position of affairs, in a great measure, arose the commencement in England of the Reformation, which, first aiming at reducing the luxury and deep corruption of manners amongst the clergy, proceeded to sweep away the abuses of religion itself.

Out of this extraordinary event arose a series of changes, chiefly fiscal in character, which, aided by the rapid depreciation in the value of money, which began to be felt soon after the suppression of the monasteries, at length wrought a great and gradual revolution in the habits of the people. Up to the end of the reign of Henry the Seventh, great alarm had been caused by the evident decline of the population, owing to the full and luxurious way of living then prevalent.

In the rural districts, the scarcity of labour had been most perceived, and had given rise to several statutes for preventing the decay of towns and villages; amongst which the decrease of numbers was heightened by the flocking of the younger men to the seaports, where the increase of trade and shipbuilding caused enormous wages to be given. In this position of affairs, the singular events of Henry the Eighth's reign at length wrought a change. The young king had sacrificed to the deep resentment of the manorial lords, and of the holders of land generally, his father's commissioners, Empson and Dudley, who, employed by the late king in recovering the crown revenues, were alleged by their accusers, who were also their judges, to have been guilty of great cruelty and extortion in the prosecution of their master's undoubtedly legal claims, and were put to death under very questionable circumstances, an act to which the young king was a consenting party.* As soon, therefore, as

* The Trial of Sir Thomas Empson, Knight, and Edmund Dudley, Esq., for High Treason, at Guildhall, London: 1 Hen. VIII., A. D. 1509. (Lord Herbert's Hen. VIII. in 2 Kenn. Compl. Hist., p. 2.)

"The most exact account of the proceedings against these two remarkable persons being to be found in Lord Herbert, we shall lay it before the reader; who, if he chooses to pursue the subject further, may consult Polydore Virgil, Hall, and Holinshed. But it is proper to premise what we conceive to be a great error which is current in respect to Empson and Dudley. Our historians in general, not excepting Lord Herbert and Mr Hume, represent Empson and Dudley to have been doubly attainted, first, by judgment on trial before a jury, and secondly, by an act of parliament. But the statute, thus treated as an act of attainder, was in truth only an act to relieve

he had dissipated the great treasure left by his father, he found himself without resources; for, after the catastrophe of the two attainted commissioners, to renew such a commission was impossible. To this dilemma the determination to suppress the smaller monasteries, where the irregularities were asserted to be greatest, put an end for a time. In order to obtain the assent of the Commons to the measure, the king undertook, for himself and his successors, not to demand any additional taxes, provided he was acknowledged head of the Anglican Church, and the property of the suppressed abbeys and convents vested in him: a compact which, as Sir Edward Coke remarks, was with very little ceremony disregarded. This inroad upon the church, however, put the king, for the time, into possession of enormous wealth, of which his favourites and the more powerful nobles soon became the owners of a large share.

The effect upon the social condition of the kingdom might have been easily foreseen, nor was it very long in showing itself. The church was, up to this period, one of the greatest sources of employment for the industrious portion of the people. The ecclesiastical buildings were by far the finest in the kingdom, and were kept in ample repair. The great

certain persons in trust for whom Empson and Dudley were seized of various estates, and to prevent their attainders from hurting innocent persons. Nor is there a word in the act, either to confirm the attainder or to attaint; as will appear by consulting the act itself, which is extant in Rastall's edition of the statutes." Hargrave. (Cobbett's, otherwise Howell's, State Trials, i. 283.)

monasteries and the bishops' palaces, as well as the capitular residences, were the scenes of a constant and liberal hospitality. In addition to this, the wealth expended by the higher clergy upon the foundation and endowment of colleges, schools, libraries, almshouses, and hospitals, was very great. The little horticulture then known in England was chiefly carried on by the monasteries, whose gardens and orchards were carefully cultivated; whilst by the rest of the nation the raising of vegetable food and the culture of fruit-trees were totally neglected. When it is considered that, besides all this, the ecclesiastics relieved all such poor persons as at that time by any chance stood in need of relief, it is not difficult to comprehend how immense must have been the effects of a change which involved the alienation of the greater part of these enormous possessions. The laymen, into whose hands the estates ultimately passed, were not bound to keep hospitality as the churchmen had done. The acts of parliament, which conveyed the lands first to the king as head of the church, did not indeed free them from the liabilities connected with the poor, and from some portion at least of the expense of repairing the parish churches and chapels.* But of these encumbrances they soon contrived to relieve themselves; and the consequence, of course, was that much of the expenditure of the revenues of these immense estates was directed into other channels, or totally stopped. The effect of this ultimately was that labour, which

* 28 Hen. VIII. cap. 28, clause 3.

had formerly commanded high wages, became in excess, and pauperism, before unknown, began to appear, and with such rapidity, that during the next reign the government became alarmed, and methods the most cruel and revolting were employed, and vainly employed, to check its progress. Contemporaneously with this sudden accession to the number of persons seeking employment, came that depreciation in the value of money which was visible throughout two centuries, and of which the effects were very extraordinary, as far as national habits were in question.

Thus, up to the era of the Reformation, England had been, for centuries, emphatically a pastoral country. The population subsisted, almost entirely, upon animal food and fish. Tillage was a matter of minor consequence; and the barley and wheat used in brewing malt-liquor was probably more in quantity than that consumed in the shape of bread. The great change in the value of money, aided by a greater number of husbandmen seeking employment, was now to alter this; and, in due time, the alteration was effected. During the reign of Elizabeth, as the precious metals were poured into Europe, and were coined into money, the prices of all commodities continued to rise. But as the rents of land still universally depended on leases for lives, which were still running, and as the owners of the property which had so recently been taken from the ecclesiastics, who were easy landlords, were unwilling to incur the contrast of harshness or extortion, the returns of land to the holders were not commensurate with the great increase in the price of

all the necessaries of life, and persons depending upon small estates in land became exceedingly distressed. Such persons, in self-defence, became themselves farmers, either of their own lands as the leases fell in, or of the lands of others; and, as tillage gave them a return much more quickly than feeding stock, so tillage was gradually introduced, and the feeding of stock and the exclusive use of animal food by the population gradually discouraged. The pressure of poverty, for which there was now no relief, began to force numbers of indigent persons, and the aged or infirm who were destitute of relatives to assist them, upon a low and miserable diet, to which Englishmen were unaccustomed, and which, in fact, never had until then been seen in England; and this change the change in agriculture contributed to hasten. Amongst the lower classes, who had distinct traditions of the manner in which their fathers had lived, this mutation produced deep and bitter discontent; until at last, for their own sakes, the queen and legislature, in the forty-third year of her reign, felt it necessary to enact that poor-law which, down to a recent period, has been the resource of the English poor; and which, at best, was only a defective substitute for that of which they were now dispossessed.

There can be no doubt in any reflecting and candid mind, that this enactment was, at the period of its occurrence, dictated by both absolute policy and pressing necessity. The English crown was then in a precarious position. The doubt as to the succession weakened the whole government. The queen, deprived of the most

part of the ancient hereditary revenues, and not daring openly to tax further a people already discontented, had recourse to the sale of monopolies, which, only in another shape, added to the existing murmurs. To this growing disaffection, of which the enemies of the queen and of the Reformation were taking advantage, the enactment of the forty-third of Elizabeth gave pause. It again helped to attach the working classes, who, at that period, all had arms in their hands, and knew how to use them, to the monarchy and to the reformation in religion, which had suffered in consequence of the social changes which accompanied it. External circumstances, however, still further advanced the change in the manner of living amongst the people at large, in which other events had made the commencement. Emulating Spain, England now resolved to possess colonies. Virginia was planted, and amidst its romantic wilds and untamed forests, the unsettled spirits which the recent changes had created found a refuge.

This movement religious animosities again accelerated. The astute and politic Elizabeth, who when not imperious was always sagacious, had endeavoured to unite under one comprehensive liturgy, cunningly worded and artfully compiled, the lingering Romanist, the Anglican Episcopalian, and the stern Calvinist. The last, however, was too unbending; and the quarrel between the Churchmen and the Presbyterian Puritans led to the settlement of the New England States of North America, and to other civil dissensions, which still further affected, in their ultimate consequences, the ancient habits of the English population. In the

meantime, the importation of the products of the new world helped forward the mutation in diet and mode of living. Grain was now more extensively cultivated; and to the more liberal use of bread was added coffee as a beverage, sweetened by the produce of the sugar-cane. The potato, brought over by Raleigh, became gradually a favourite root; and tea, the product of China, after Vasco de Gama showed the timid seamen of that time the ocean-road to India, was added to coffee and sugar. Such were the social changes that accompanied the accession of the Stuarts and the union of the two crowns. Their effects were very curious and instructive to the philosophical inquirer.

After James the First, notwithstanding the work of colonizing America went on, that decline in the population was not heard of, which, a century before, had induced great alarm, and frequently occupied the attention of the legislature. Some of the prevalent diseases also disappeared. The disorder styled "leprosy," which, during the preceding centuries, had so prevailed as to cause the foundation of numerous hospitals for lepers, and which was probably some dire form of scorbutus, arising from the use of salted meats and fish through much of the year, and the utter neglect of vegetable aliment, now gradually became extinct. The agues also, which during the preceding centuries were the prevalent epidemics, under the various species of quotidian, tertian, and quartan, became more mild and less prevailing as the progress of tillage induced drainage; but as ague diminished, phthisis and other

forms of strumous debility became more observable; and consumption is now, as ague once was, the canker of English constitutions. In other respects, the people were still generally prosperous. An increasing circulation of money rendered the payment of such imposts as were levied easier than before; and had the Stuart family possessed the good sense to apply to a parliament for such additions to the revenue as the loss of the ancient feudal services rendered really necessary, all might have gone well. The fears of foreign invasion had vanished with the catastrophe of Medina Sidonia and his scattered armada; and had it not been for the utter folly and bigotry of its rulers, the country might have been substantially at ease.

The wisest of English statesmen then living (Robert Cecil) had assured James Stuart that he would find his new subjects "as easily led as asses" are by those who know how to do it. James the First and his favourites, however, chose to raise money by the sale of monopolies and honours, and by the most unwarrantable assumption of royal rights over their subjects' persons and purses, rather than apply to a parliament which, Robert Cecil had assured them, might, by a little management, be induced to do anything. His son followed the same absurd counsels. Religious animosity mixed itself with social discontent, and the revolution of 1640 followed, which still further accelerated the social changes now in reserve. The majority of the Long Parliament consisted of holders of great landed estates; and their interests and feelings were those of landlords. They therefore lost no time,

amongst other changes, less selfish perhaps, and thus far less reprehensible, in ridding themselves of such of the few remains of the feudal fiscal system as were left. They abolished the whole of the remaining tenures which involved service and payments of money; and thus they threw upon the people at large the burden of raising the revenue by means of indirect taxation; one species of which was the excise, now first known in this country.

It is not difficult to see that the ultimate deep unpopularity of the Long Parliament arose mainly out of the enormous demands made by them upon the industrious classes, then unused to have their limited means trenched upon by the governing powers, whose business they deemed it was to protect them. Nor is it less obvious, that the favour with which the Restoration was hailed by the English people, and the comparative popularity which, in spite of his notorious vices and want of all principle, Charles the Second enjoyed during his whole reign, are to be for the most part ascribed to the delight which the public felt in the removal of these grinding exactions (as they were then deemed), and to the substantial ease with which the people at large lived during the period of the Restoration, when the king's whole revenue was under two millions per annum of the money of that day, worth perhaps about three millions of the present money. In consequence of this position of the fiscal policy of the country, the habits of the mass of the people underwent little alteration between the period of the Restoration and

that of the Revolution, made by the Whig party in 1688; notwithstanding the profligacy of the court of Charles, and the religious contentions of the time, which agitated the surface of society only, without affecting it deeply.

By the Revolution of 1688 was caused, from the very necessity of the case, a change in the financial system of the country, which, denounced in its commencement by some of the wisest and some of the best men of that period, and occasionally since that time by men of the profoundest views and most comprehensive minds, has been continued ever since, and by its influence has worked still further social changes, more extraordinary even than those which preceded them. This change was the funding system, of which it cannot be denied, either by those who approve or those who disapprove of it, that it has produced greater social mutation in this country than any event since the period of the overthrow of the Anglican Catholic Church, not excepting even the two political revolutions of 1640 and 1688. The abettors of the latter of these two great changes were undoubtedly, and for a long time, in a most dangerous position. There seems little reason for supposing that the majority of the nation, although they disapproved of the religious bigotry of James the Second, and totally distrusted the professions of tolerance with which he masked his imprudent zeal, were prepared for transferring the crown to the female line; or that the wiser and more moderate thinkers of the time did not distrust a scheme which placed upon the throne a prince,

whose peculiar position in Europe was such as to render it certain that he would involve England in a conflict to which she was really unequal.

France, long torn by factions, had now become consolidated under Louis the Fourteenth. Her population was probably at this time three times that of Great Britain. The character of the French king was a mixture of unscrupulous ambition and rooted bigotry; and could he have succeeded in his designs, there can be no doubt that the independence of the Protestant portions of Europe would have been jeopardized. England, strong in maritime power and in her insular position, though weak in population, was quite equal to her own defence against France and Spain, and such portions of Germany as were under French or Catholic influence. But the accession of William the Third plunged her into continental politics, and into hostilities and alliances which lasted through the whole reign of Queen Anne, and by the accumulation of public debt, which the new financial system rapidly created, and the consequent load of taxes entailed upon the industrious classes, caused another and a serious inroad upon their habits and comforts, causing at the same time a mutual antipathy betwixt this country and France eventuating in the most disastrous results. The ambition and the power of the aspiring Louis the Fourteenth had been indeed baffled and broken by the successes of the allies under Marlborough and Eugene of Savoy, but the exasperation of the two countries still continued, and various minor conflicts took place, of which the conclusion

was the conquest of French or Lower Canada by the army of Great Britain under Wolfe.

These operations were, on the whole, brilliant and showy in outward semblance, but they had been achieved at an expense to the country of unprecedented magnitude, weighing heavily upon the people. After the conclusion of the war in Canada, during the first year of George the Third, in 1761, the peace establishment had risen to the enormous sum of nine millions per annum—enormous as compared with that of James the Second, which was under two millions, causing at that period much alarm to all reflecting men, who saw how impossible it is, during the breathing-time of peace, to induce any people to submit to additional taxes to clear off the debts of war, which are postponable indefinitely without breach of engagement, and are therefore always postponed. The dissatisfaction of the British people, caused by the extent to which their burdens had now been carried, was no doubt the cause of the national calamity that soon afterwards ensued. British America, after the conquest of Canada, was the most splendid colony that can well be conceived. It now embraced the whole eastern region of North America from Louisiana, still a French possession, to Hudson's Bay, and contained a flourishing and wealthy population of upwards of three millions of souls. This people, in great part the descendants of those who, at different periods, had sought a refuge in the New World from persecution at home, the British ministers, not daring further to trench upon the comforts of the people of England, in an evil

hour resolved to tax, not only without but against their own consent. The colonists having petitioned and remonstrated against this most questionable and impolitic procedure, and without success, at last resisted force by force; and France, smarting under the loss of Canada, having sent assistance to the rebellious colonists, after a war, which lasted from 1775 to 1783, the whole was, together with three armies, lost, excepting only Canada, which had adhered to the British government during the entire contest.

This disastrous catastrophe necessarily made another and a ruinous inroad upon the comfort and well-being of the industrious classes. The nation, still partly aware of the ease and happiness with which their ancestors had lived, resounded with complaints, and auguries the most sinister, as to the future destinies of the kingdom, began to be indulged in by politicians of all grades. The whole debt, accumulated through the wars of William the Third, Queen Anne, and the three Georges, now reached the astounding amount of two hundred and fifty millions sterling; and the peace establishment, after the conclusion of the calamitous American conflict, nearly reached the large sum of nineteen millions per annum. This heavy load could not but cut deeply into the prosperity of those whose only resource is manual labour. Industrious and laborious to the extreme as the British artisan or labourer is above all others, he yet could not by his toil provide for the payment of the indirect taxation which was now laid upon him, and at the same time by additional toil provide for himself and family

the same food, drink, shelter, and clothing that his forefathers had been accustomed to enjoy. Necessity, however, is the mother of invention; and as the demand for cheaper fabrics became more and more pressing during the course of the American war, English mechanical ingenuity hit upon a means to furnish it; and from these inventions, and the extraordinary consequences attending them, the family of Peel now took rise, and became in various ways conspicuous.

In 1738, it has been ascertained that a patent for spinning threads by means of rollers was taken out by Messrs Wyatt and Paul; but whether owing to the different circumstances of the time, or to some imperfection in the scheme, this patent was not productive of any remarkable consequences; and it was not until 1767 that the invention of the spinning-jenny by Mr James Hargreaves, a master carpenter of Blackburn in Lancashire, gave rise to a series of mechanical discoveries in the art of spinning and weaving by means of machinery, the consequences of which, for good or for evil, it is impossible to calculate. The spinning-jenny of Hargreaves was, in 1769, followed by the invention by Sir Richard Arkwright of the more perfect method of spinning by means of rollers. To this wonderful piece of mechanism was, in 1774, added the power-loom of the Rev. Dr Cartwright; and in 1775 the mule was devised by Mr Crompton, who thus combined the jenny of Hargreaves with the rollers of Arkwright. To this career of discovery the improved steam-engine of Watt in 1783 gave a new impulse; and since that period

no year perhaps has passed without giving birth to some improvement in the making or dressing of cotton, linen, woollen, or silk fabrics by means of machinery. Amidst this revelation of the powers of mechanism when in skilful and energetic hands, the family of Peel took its rise, owing for the most part its prosperity, though not all its honours, to the enterprise of its founders.

The discovery of Mr Hargreaves attracted the attention, amongst others, of Mr Peel, a calico-printer of the town of Blackburn, when the invention of the spinning-jenny was perfected. Being possessed of means, he immediately prepared to avail himself of the advantages to be derived from such a discovery; and in this enterprise he was ably aided by his son Robert, destined to become afterwards the first Sir Robert Peel. The legislature, which up to the year 1774, had, on the instigation of those engaged in the woollen, linen, and silk manufactures, strenuously opposed all attempts to introduce the cheaper and more homely commodity of cotton as an article of ordinary dress, then felt the necessity of giving way; so that, when the invention of Mr Hargreaves was perfected, no obstacle to its full and immediate employment in the spinning of cotton remained. Mr Peel accordingly, aided by his sons, of whom the first baronet was the third, established his first cotton-mill at Brookside, a small village not far from Blackburn in Lancashire. Here he for some years had already conducted a growing and highly prosperous business as a calico-printer, and here he first became

a cotton-spinner, seeing at once the immense gains to be derived from the invention of Hargreaves. His third son Robert had before this period quitted his father's connexion, and become the partner of a Mr Yates of Bury, whose daughter he afterwards married. He too, like his father, was fully prescient of the enormous profits which were certain to be derived from the first employment of the new spinning machinery, of which, following the example of his father Mr Peel of Brookside, he and his partner lost no time in availing themselves. It was soon discovered by the Peels that the invention of spinning by means of machinery was productive of even greater cheapness than its inventor perhaps anticipated. Peel and Yates found that this machinery might work under the guidance principally of children of both sexes, and in the employment of such, another source of profit was accordingly opened. If the parents of the children in the vicinity of Bury hesitated to consign their offspring to the strict discipline of the cotton-mill, no such objection was felt by the overseers of the poor and the masters of workhouses at a distance. These persons eagerly grasped at a method of disposing of the poor, the deserted, and the orphan children, whom a hard lot had placed under their protection. Numbers of these children were sent by the parish authorities into Lancashire to aid the new method of manufacture, and thus commenced the employment of infants of both sexes in the cotton manufacture—a system to which, whatever political economists may say, and

truly say, of its commercial advantages, candid inquirers must attribute a portion of the moral and social evils that at present afflict this country.

This prosperous career of the enterprising family of Peel was not, however, suffered to proceed unclouded and unalloyed by adversity. The invention of Hargreaves, however agreeable it might be to those possessed of capital and a spirit of commercial ambition, was by no means so viewed by the labouring population of Lancashire. These men had already felt the pressure upon their wages, caused by the system of taxation out of which had arisen the very invention for the production of cheap clothing which now astonished and alarmed them. To their simple mode of reasoning, the new machinery of Hargreaves, their neighbour, was only the pestilent invention of a means to dispense with their assistance, and to substitute for it the craft of a few women and children. It was in vain to point out to them that, partly owing to the inferiority of the article produced by machinery when compared with fabrics spun and woven by the more direct application of the human hand, and partly to the increased consumption which great apparent cheapness was sure to produce, more labour would erelong be required in Lancashire than could have been required without Mr Hargreaves' invention. Such reasoning, for them, had no force. They could not look beyond the present. The temporary and first effects of the introduction of the spinning-jenny were felt and seen, and immediately resented by the adult working population. Nor was

this alarm by any means confined to the operative class. Tradesmen, farmers, and magistrates at quarter-sessions anticipated similar results. Farmers and shop-keepers began to tremble before visions of unemployed labourers and augmented poor-rates; and squires began to prophesy a coming millennium of poachers, and the ultimate extinction of game. That the strength of these feelings should at length find vent in violence is no matter for wonder, however it may be for regret. General alarm was followed at last by riot and open breaches of the peace. Bodies of working men scoured the country; destroying not only the new works caused by the discovery of Mr Hargreaves, but all carding-machines, and every device for dispensing with manual labour that attracted their attention. Against the author of the change, and his abettors the cotton-manufacturers, their feelings of hatred were extreme; and the result was, that the inventor of this extraordinary piece of mechanism found it necessary to seek safety in flight, whilst the works of Mr Peel the elder at Blackburn were destroyed.

This cloud upon the prosperity of the Peel family soon, however, passed away. The elder Peel, driven from the vicinity of Blackburn, transferred his enterprise and his wealth to Burton-upon-Trent. To Bury, the seat of the splendid business of his third son, the burst of popular resentment never extended; and the final effect of this violence was to transfer to Manchester many of the menaced manufacturers, who thus formed the nucleus of that emporium of mechani-

cal skill, rapidity of acquisition, and untiring enterprise, which has since astonished the world. Of the powers of the improved steam-engine of Watt, the Peels, like other manufacturers, were not slow to avail themselves. This vast and easily manageable power gave to the cotton manufacture an impulse that nothing could arrest; and Mr Peel of Bury, together with his partner Mr Yates, now, like many of their competitors, rose rapidly to fortune, and to that consequence which in a commercial country wealth most surely imparts. As wealth poured rapidly in, the partners naturally extended concerns so lucrative; and amongst other districts, they established a branch of their business at Tamworth, then a very pretty rural town. This town, being an ancient borough, in course of time afforded Mr Peel an easy and quiet access to parliament: and this circumstance it was which ultimately induced this fortunate family to seize an opportunity of seating themselves on the estate of Drayton-Manor in the vicinity of the borough, which now became and still continues a sort of appendage to the family of Peel, having successively sent three possessors of the Manor to the House of Commons.

It would be a mistake to regard, as some have done, the first Sir Robert Peel, now Mr Peel of Bury, as a mere energetic cotton-spinner, endowed with good luck and an untiring spirit of accumulation. The truth is, that Mr Peel, without being a man of brilliant talent, was possessed of a somewhat comprehensive and inquiring mind, which was by no means

engrossed by the attention necessary for the conduct of his immense and extended manufacturing enterprises. He was also, in his rise to fortune, curiously circumstanced in one particular, and that was in the fact that the spring of the cotton-manufacture was contemporaneous with a period of much national disaster and suffering. In 1783, when the improved steam-engine of James Watt was introduced, was only brought to a close one of the most disastrous conflicts in which this country was ever engaged, and which resulted in the separation from the mother-country of the splendid North American colonies, Canada excepted, and an addition to the public debt of one hundred and fifty millions sterling; the attempt to tax these colonies, in which this unhappy war originated, being itself the fruit of the pressure created by the accumulated debt which followed the Revolution of 1688. As soon, therefore, as the event of the war became dubious, and its financial consequences more and more certain, the war itself became more and more unpopular; and the press teemed with treatises deprecatory of the financial consequences which now began to be apparent.

This war of opinion seems to have strongly excited the mind of the now great and opulent cotton-manufacturer, whose extensive private concerns naturally led him to the investigation of monetary and financial questions. In 1780, he entered into the arena of financial pamphleteers, and produced a pamphlet, with the hope of persuading the nation by means of arguments, certainly not new,

but then deemed plausible if not convincing, that "national debt" is "national blessing."* That this pamphlet should have failed in producing any appreciable effect upon the public mind is no derogation

* It seems to have been an object with financiers, through several centuries, to persuade their hearers or readers that the necessity of taking from the people a portion of their means, in the shape of taxes, is not an evil, even in the abstract: and this they seem to have relied upon doing by the use of one ingenious metaphor,—that is to say, by likening taxes to rains and dews, which first rising from the earth, return to it again! The inventor of this certainly pretty metaphor seems to have been Morton, archbishop of Canterbury, who was chancellor in the reign of Henry VII. Speaking of the imports under that monarch, he is recorded by Lord Bacon to have thus expressed himself—"eæ pecuniæ, quæ a vobis conferuntur, sint tantùm instar vaporum qui e terrâ in sublime attrahuntur et in nubes coëunt, quæ rursus in terram imbres refundunt." From Archbishop Morton the simile appears to have been adopted by the ministers of Charles I., as we learn from the following expressions of Lord Digby to the Long Parliament in 1640. "It hath been a metaphor frequent in parliament, and, if my memory fail not, was made use of in the lord keeper's speech at the opening of the last, that what moneys kings raised from their subjects was but as vapours drawn from the earth by the sun, to be distilled upon it again in fructifying showers. The comparison, Mr Speaker, hath held of late in this kingdom too unluckily. What hath been drawn from the subject by these violent attractions hath been formed, it is true, into clouds to darken the sun's lustre, and hath fallen again upon the land in hailstones and mildews to batter and prostrate our liberties, and blast and wither our affections." From the lord keeper of Charles the metaphor came to Burke, who in one of his speeches described, amidst the admiration of the House, taxes as being "like dews drawn up for a time, only to fall back to earth again in fertilizing showers." Sir Robert Peel seems to have amused himself and his readers with the same fallacy, with regard to the

from the ability of its author. It is impossible to persuade mankind that the payment of taxes is not an evil in the abstract, however necessary to the ends of society; and so Mr Peel found it.

The turn which the political affairs of the country, however, took about this period, was such as to help to confirm Mr Peel in his propensity for the examination of monetary questions, which about this time assumed a prominence in the public mind of which they have never since been altogether deprived, extraordinary as the history of the last half-century has been. To the discontent and alarm caused by the added burdens entailed upon the nation by the calamitous contest with the North American colonists, were added rumours the most sinister, as to the approaching bankruptcy of the French monarchy, and the events to which the impending catastrophe might probably give rise. These difficulties, and the dangers likely to result from them, formed the subject-matter of innumerable pamphlets, for the most part of a financial character; and to the forebodings in which many of

interest paid upon public debts; endeavouring to strengthen his case by likening such debts to "a family-account," which, says he, cannot be an evil, being paid by the family to itself. These ingenious quibbles are now deservedly exploded by political economists. They leave out an essential part of the question, and then prove too much. It is true the money which a man pays in tax may be expended in his own shop (as it also might were it taken by a highwayman), but then he must give value for it a second time, either in labour or goods: and Sir Robert forgot that if the interest of such debts were to remain unpaid, it would be a "family-account" still, the interest being owing from only one part of the family to another!

them abundantly dealt, the critical state of parties, and the growing weakness of the government after the American crisis, gave an additional zest. The war had not only broken down the spirit and exhausted the means of the people, but had also thrown the national finances into a state of great confusion, from which no minister seemed strong enough or honest enough to rescue them. A large portion of the political discussions of the time consequently turned upon the pivot of finance; and this position of affairs at length brought forward upon the stage of politics the young aspirant, William Pitt, the second son of the great and illustrious Earl of Chatham.

However discordant the conclusion of the career of this minister may appear in the eyes of many when compared with its beginning, it seems certain that the young William Pitt felt, saw, and understood the evils as well as the perils of the country at this gloomy juncture of its affairs. He accordingly began his political life as a financial reformer. He strenuously urged the necessity of all parties in the state uniting for the prosecution of this object; and not finding his efforts in this direction seconded as he had expected, he acknowledged the necessity of some reform in the constitution of the House of Commons, which he now saw was unable, together with the Crown, to resist the too often selfish influence of the great peers and other patrons of the smaller boroughs. Aided by the influence which he derived from bearing the name and being supposed to have inherited the talents as well as the public virtues

of his illustrious father, Mr Pitt, still a youth, speedily became the favourite of the nation, whom the coalition of North and Fox had thoroughly disgusted and exasperated. Mr Pitt was unquestionably a Tory in the sense in which Swift, Pope, St John, and Harley were Tories; but he by no means held the more modern and compendious doctrine which Horsley summed up in one comprehensive sentence, "that the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them!" On the contrary, it was the opinion of Mr Pitt that power ought, under the English constitution, to be so divided that any two of the three depositaries—regal, aristocratic, and popular—might, by uniting, control the third; and upon this ground he advocated a cautious and moderate addition to the popular element of the House of Commons. For these really moderate proposals he however found few supporters; and his popularity really rested upon his economical maxims, the value of which were at this period deeply felt by the people, to whom the pressure of a high taxation was still comparatively strange. These maxims, aided by the support of the king, who at this time acted cordially with the people, together with the disgust inspired by the unprincipled coalition of Mr Fox with Lord North, speedily made Mr Pitt prime minister; and amongst all his supporters the young premier found none more zealous than the wealthy cotton-spinner, whose economical notions seem to have singularly squared with those of the celebrated minister throughout the entire period of his extraordinary career.

In 1783, on the 8th of July, Mr Peel, now a rich and prosperous manufacturer, formed his first matrimonial connexion with Miss Yates, the eldest daughter of his partner, Mr Yates. The first fruit of this union was a daughter, as was also the second; but, on the 5th July 1788, was born his eldest son, Robert, the celebrated statesman, whose extraordinary political career is to be depicted and traced in the course of the following pages; and as if "to marshal him the way that he was going," Mr Peel the father, two years after the birth of his son Robert—that is to say, in 1790—entered the House of Commons as a member.

It has been already stated that the house of which Mr Peel was the active partner had established a branch of their business in the little borough town at Tamworth, for which place Mr Peel was, in the year above named, elected member. Nor was this unnatural: he and his partner had by their enterprise raised the borough from a declining to a comparatively flourishing condition. Mr Peel had now become a large owner of property in the town and its vicinity, and he very naturally, being ambitious of political influence, aspired to represent it. A good deal has been said about some presentiment on the part of Mr Peel that he should become the founder of a conspicuous family; nor is it unlikely that he might feel some such early presentiment. His practical mind must very soon have obtained glimpses—uncertain indeed, but very captivating—of the possible results of the discovery of Mr Hargreaves, and of Mr, afterwards Sir

Richard, Arkwright; and what is "a presentiment" but the glimpse of a sanguine and practical mind of the possible future? Mr Peel was now on the road to this goal of his ambition, and what so sure to help forward upon that onward path as parliamentary influence? He accordingly became the patron of Tamworth, and, as member for that borough, one of Mr Pitt's most zealous and enthusiastic supporters. Mr Pitt, on his part, was not slow to discover and to cultivate the advantage of the constant countenance of a man of Mr Peel's immense and rising wealth and increasing commercial influence. This intercourse very naturally led to the baronetcy which, in 1800, was conferred upon Mr Peel, who repaid the distinction by a devotion which the strange vicissitudes of the career of the minister, after 1793, could neither alter nor impair.

Into the perilous and impolitic step of plunging the nation, now slowly recovering from the effects of the disastrous struggle in North America, into a war with republican France, Mr Pitt was probably forced by the fears of the great holders of property and of the dignified clergy. They were alarmed to the utmost by the progress of a social convulsion, which, in its advance, seemed to be proceeding to destroy every ancient institution existing in Europe, and to arms they resolved to appeal. To armies, however, it appears evidently that the minister, whose military views were timid and crude, trusted less than to the ruinous state of the finances of the young republic, which he deemed must become desperate after

a declaration of war by England. At that moment this conclusion appeared to the view of all reflecting persons as highly probable; and in all likelihood it so appeared to the first Sir Robert Peel, as well as the minister of his idolatry, Mr Pitt. Nor was it unreasonable in itself. As financiers, both the prime minister and the newly made baronet must have regarded the position of the French Republic as desperate; and neither of them could be aware of the apparent miracles which, against all human calculation, may be performed by a nation of thirty millions, the great majority of whom are, whether right or wrong, enthusiastically bent upon certain achievements. The French revolutionary government, deprived of coin, which was hoarded during the whole of its tempestuous and anomalous career, and having confiscated the estates of the church and of the noblesse, had recourse to that unfailing resource of all new and unsettled governments, a paper money, which was issued upon the credit of those estates now called "National Domains." As the perils and difficulties of the various revolutionary French governments increased, however, the issues of this fictitious money were of necessity augmented, whilst with every augmentation its credit diminished.

The French "assignats," as this currency was called, were now at an enormous discount; and by completing their discredit, Mr Pitt believed he should finish the war at once. The accession of England to the hostile league of the European powers went far to produce this catastrophe; and to complete the work, the minister had recourse to a device, novel as a mode of war-

fare—that is to say, the forgery of the paper money of the enemy.* This procedure on the part of Mr Pitt has been since denied, but its truth rests upon indisputable evidence, and the attempt was quite char-

* In 1795, a dispute between the engraver of the plate for the forging of the assignats and the stationer who had the management of the business, gave rise to an action at *nisi prius*, which is reported as follows by Espinasse:—

Michaelmas Term, 36 George III., 1795. Second sittings in term of the Court of King's Bench. *Strongitharm* v. *Lukyn*.

Case on a Promissory Note.

The note was drawn by the defendant, payable to one Caslon, and by Caslon endorsed to the plaintiff.

The plaintiff proved the defendant's handwriting and the endorsement by Caslon.

Erskine, for defendant, stated his defence to be, that Lukyn was a stationer and the plaintiff an engraver; and that the note upon which the action was brought was given to Caslon for the purpose of paying the plaintiff for the engraving of copperplates upon which French assignats were to be forged; and contended that, as the consideration of the note was fraud, it contaminated the whole transaction, and rendered the note not recoverable by law.

Caslon, the endorser, was called as the witness. He proved that Lukyn, the defendant, having it in contemplation to strike off impressions of a considerable quantity of assignats, to be issued abroad, had applied to him for the purpose of recommending an engraver for the purpose of engraving the necessary plates; and that Lukyn represented to him that they were for the Duke of York's army.

He said that he applied to Strongitharm, the plaintiff, who at first declined the business totally; but that, being assured by the witness that it was sanctioned by government, and was for the use of the Duke of York's army, he then consented. The witness further denied that it was ever communicated to the plaintiff that they were to be circulated for any other purpose than as he had represented.

acteristic of a politician who knew better than most men that money constitutes the real sinews of war.

Lord KENYON said, that if the present transaction was grounded on a fraud, or contrary to the laws of nations, or of good faith, he should have held the notes to be void; but it did not appear that there was any fraud in the case, or any violation of positive law. Whether the issuing of these assignats, for the purpose of distressing the enemy, was lawful in carrying on the war, he was not prepared to say; or whether it came within the rule, *an dolus an virtus quis in hostê requirit?* But let that be as it might, it did not apply to the present case. It was not in evidence that the plaintiff was a party in any fraud, or that it was ever communicated to him that the assignats were to be used for any improper purpose; on the contrary, he supposed that they were circulated by the authority of the higher powers of this country, and therefore did not question the propriety or legality of the measure.

His Lordship declared his opinion, therefore, to be, that the consideration was not impeached, and that the plaintiff was entitled to recover.

The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff.

Mingay and *Marryat* for the plaintiff.

Erskine and *Law* for the defendant.

Espinasse's Reports, p. 389.

The author having in a former work (the Financial History of England) erroneously stated that the paper used for the forgery of the assignats was made at Langley Mill, in the county of Durham, (a mistake probably arising from the proprietor of the mill, where the paper was actually manufactured, having the same name as the proprietor of Langley Mill,) deems this a proper opportunity for clearing up this undoubted historical fact, which he is now enabled to do. The circumstances which led to this result are these.—Being, during the spring of 1852, in the course of a fishing expedition, at the house of Christopher Colbeck, Esq., of Walwick Grange on the North Tyne, and the fabrication of the French assignats having been accidentally alluded to, Mr Colbeck assured me that the paper for

If success be a justification, then, were justification needed, is this attempt fully justified, for it completed

that purpose was unquestionably made at Haughton paper-mill on the North Tyne, on the estate of a neighbour of his own, William Smith, Esq., of Haughton Castle. Mr Colbeck further kindly proposed to introduce me to the acquaintance of Mr Smith, who would, he was sure, readily afford me full proof of the facts of this curious transaction. To this proposal I of course readily acceded, and towards the end of April, having again become a visiter at Walwick Grange, I found that Mr Colbeck had arranged with Mr Smith that we should spend a day at Haughton Castle, which we accordingly did. From the kindness of Mr Smith, I obtained evidence of the whole circumstances, which precludes all further doubt upon the subject. The substance of Mr Smith's narrative was this :—Towards the end of the American war, and during his father's lifetime, one of the farms of the estate of Haughton Castle was held by a farmer named Magnay, a married man, with more than one son. In due time, one of the young Magnays found his way to London in search of fortune; and being probably favoured by the partners in the paper mill, of whom the then owner of the estate was one, he became a wholesale stationer, and being steady, clever, and active, he soon rose to eminence as a stationer, and became an alderman of the city of London.

From Alderman Magnay, some time after the declaration of war with France in 1793, came the order for the paper to be used in the fabrication of assignats. Having passed some years of his earlier life on this secluded spot, he must have known its fitness for a purpose where publicity was not desirable; and hence the transmission of the order to the concern in which his father's landlord was a partner. For a transaction of secrecy no situation can exceed that of Haughton paper-mill, which is placed beneath the eminence on which this beautiful old border fortress stands, far distant from any other habitation, with no town nearer than Hexham, which is many miles distant, and surrounded by country where all the wildness of the border still exists to a great extent. That the purpose for which the paper was wanted was fully understood by the partners, Mr

the annihilation of the credit of the assignats, in spite of the terrible means adopted by the French Convention to force their circulation. It is not a little curious, however, to reflect that, within a very few years after the destruction of the French assignats—that is to say, in 1797—Mr Pitt himself should have been driven by the force of circumstances to adopt this very expedient, and risk the hazardous step of relying upon an inconvertible paper circulation; and that this measure, the fruit of imperious necessity alone, should be classed by his eulogists, and by the first Sir Robert Peel amongst others, amongst the brilliant phases of his administration.

In the midst of these events, and whilst his father

Smith assured me. Indeed the mould in which the paper was made, and which he showed us, leaves little room for doubt. It is calculated to manufacture a small oblong sheet, each of which made four assignats. Mr Smith obligingly gave me some paper, made from it, to exhibit the water-marks, which prove the purpose. The date of 1790 appears on each compartment, and at the left end of each note is a sort of ornamental flourish, resembling those we sometimes see imprinted on bank-notes. Mr Smith's belief is, that the plates were struck off in London, although he distinctly remembers seeing several of the fabricated assignats (probably sent down as curiosities by Alderman Magnay) in his late father's possession; and I have been further assured by Mr John Bell, land-surveyor, of Newcastle, who knew the late Mr Smith, that he obtained from that gentleman more than one of the fictitious assignats, which he afterwards parted with at the solicitation of various friends. There cannot, therefore, remain any reasonable doubt as to this curious matter of history. Lukyn, the defendant in the action, was some obscure stationer, probably, employed by Mr Magnay to obtain the plates, strike off the fictitious assignats, and manage the details of the affair.

was obtaining for himself some distinction as a speaker on commercial and financial subjects in the House of Commons, young Peel was sufficiently matured to be sent to a great public school before being entered at one of the universities. Harrow was the school selected for his son by Sir Robert Peel; and to Harrow he was accordingly sent, and remained there until of age to go to Oxford. At Harrow the younger Peel acquired that character which he sustained through life. He was diligent, studious, and sagacious, if not quick, but never brilliant; preserving a high station amongst his schoolmates by exertion and perseverance rather than genius; and being remarkable for prudent good sense rather than showy talent. To the truth of this delineation we have the unexceptionable testimony of his illustrious schoolfellow, Lord Byron, who, like most other men of original genius and great and independent mind, made no figure either at school or college, and at Harrow was eclipsed by Peel, his inferior in everything but prudence, steadiness, and application.

At Christchurch College, Oxford, he displayed, after leaving Harrow School, the same highly useful assemblage of qualities. To some quickness he united much diligence and aptitude for study; and in mathematics, as well as classical literature generally, he obtained high honours. But all his acquirements were of the solid kind, and such as a laborious student of good practical sagacity may always acquire. Of wit, or imagination, or of the inventive faculty in general, Mr Peel had little; and to such men the absence

of these more specious qualifications is a negative advantage. If they are unable to dazzle others, in the same ratio are they exempted from being dazzled by them; and hence it is, that persons so qualified have a clearer view of the characters of those with whom they have to deal, and are better adapted to the ordinary business of life than their more accomplished competitors. In the course of the year 1808 Mr Peel completed his studies at Oxford. From the very cradle, it may be said, he was destined by his sagacious and aspiring parent for a politician; and in 1809 he was of age to allow of his being placed for a borough in parliament. The borough for which he first sat in the House of Commons was that of Cashel; a seat which he who had the greatest command of money was the most likely to obtain, and on this occasion it became that of Mr Peel without opposition.

CHAPTER II.

State of Parties in 1809—The War in Spain—The progressive Depreciation of the Currency, and continued Rise in Prices—Their Effects—The Press becomes more free—Causes of this—Napoleon's Continental System—Berlin and Milan Decrees—Inclosure Acts—The Rise of the Economist Party—Mr Peel enters the House of Commons—He sides with Government—Mr Canning's Position—Mr Perceval Premier—Lord Castlereagh, Sheridan, Horner, Brougham, Romilly, Burdett, Lord Palmerston—Mr Peel defends Ministers—The Bullion Committee—its Report—Vansittart's Resolution—Mr Peel's Conduct—He is made Under-secretary to the Colonies—Spanish Guerillas—Manufacturing Distress—Alarm of Mr Perceval—Marylebone-Park Scheme—Mr Perceval shot.

When Mr Peel entered the House of Commons in 1809, Mr Spencer Perceval was at the head of the administration. He was not a man of much ability of any sort, and, as a statesman, was narrow in his views, and immovable in his prejudices. But he was resolute and indefatigable in all he undertook; and in short, was a keen, bustling, business-doing lawyer. Still, although the prime-minister was not extraordinary, the epoch was of no ordinary description. The nation had now, for a period of sixteen years, been carrying on a desperate war against France, of which those who urged the continuance seemed even to themselves to hope against hope. The gigantic and impetuous genius of Napoleon was now employed in

again crushing the leaden and Bœotian power of Austria; Prussia was almost annihilated in a military point of view; Russia was, ostensibly at least, neutral, if not friendly; and, in a guerilla warfare in Spain, the last light of European continental independence seemed to be flickering to its end. In Great Britain, the great Tory party were still almost absolute rulers in outward appearance; but to those who looked narrowly, critically, and wisely at political events, some symptoms of weakness, which time could not but increase, were becoming, though almost imperceptibly, more and more obvious. During the continuance of a conflict, which by this country was supported for the most part by means of enormous annual loans and an inconvertible paper circulation—the exchangeable value of which, from the constant small additions to its quantity, was slowly and gradually depreciating from day to day, the administrative power could hardly be shaken by any opposition, so vast was the influence and patronage created by this huge expenditure. Other causes, however, were in operation, the effect of which was silently to sap this seemingly impregnable foundation of a power for the time uncontrollable.

From and after the commencement of the nineteenth century, the events of the war unavoidably tended to enlarge the freedom and influence of the press, especially of the newspaper press. As soon as the terrible genius of Napoleon became ascendant, it was necessary to the salvation of Great Britain to rouse the spirit of the people to the utmost against

him. But arbitrary power, in the person of the First Consul and Emperor, could not be attacked without despotic rule in the abstract being at the same time assailed. The continental monarchs had also, in the extremity of their alarm, begun to promise to their subjects free constitutions as the price of resolute national resistance to the devouring ambition of the French Emperor; and hence pens, which heretofore had not known how to write the words, began to join together the forbidden letters unscathed by censorship. In England, also, the fearful vicissitudes of the war had favoured the liberty of the press. The lower classes, whom it was now necessary to rouse, had become readers; and to them exclusively cheap periodicals, without the burden of the newspaper-stamp, began to be addressed, in which strictures, by no means remarkable for moderation, on the passing events of the time, frequently appeared, unchecked by attornies-general, who felt it impolitic in such a crisis to prosecute too vindictively publications of a popular kind.

Such was the state of public opinion on the outside of the walls of the House of Commons; whilst within the House itself, symptoms of a greater freedom of thinking began gradually and slowly to develop themselves. This latitude of thought amongst members of parliament did not, however, at first assume a shape directly political. It in the commencement took the less questionable shape of science, probably because a freedom of inquiry, which in any other form would at that period have been deemed "Jacobinical," passed, in scientific garb, unquestioned and undreaded.

Although John Locke, David Hume, and the French Economists, with some others of less celebrated name, had treated of some portions of the science of political economy with great sagacity and clearness, yet until the work of Adam Smith, under the captivating title of an "Inquiry into the Causes of the Wealth of Nations," appeared, political economy in Great Britain was hardly ranked as a science. After Dr Smith's publication became popular, various writers took the same path—amongst others the contributors to the now celebrated Edinburgh Review; and as some of these contributors entered the House of Commons about the same time with Mr Peel, he found questions of currency, finance, and trade, discussed by such men as Horner, Huskisson, and Brougham, with a freedom that was probably new to him, educated as he had been in that mode of treating all national questions which at that period was styled, High Toryism. And, certainly, the discussion of this description of questions was provoked by the circumstances of the time.

In addition to the vicissitudes in the condition of various portions of the people, caused by the course of hostilities, the nation was now exposed to all the novel and perplexing phenomena arising out of a paper currency in a state of constant depreciation, which depreciation was, nevertheless, denied by the government and by the mass of its supporters, by whom the matter was really not at all understood. In fact, with the exception of a few individuals in and out of parliament, by whom the question was resolutely studied, the whole nation may be justly at that time de-

scribed as being without the slightest notion of the real cause of the mutations which every day almost brought with it. The leading phenomenon was a continued rise in the nominal value of all commodities, subject of course to the oscillations which the fluctuating course of commerce and of credit, as acted upon by the incidents of a general war, from time to time created. This advance in the nominal value of things was in a considerable degree delusive, the money received being every year, as more paper was fabricated, of less and less value. It gave, however, an idea of great prosperity, and by its operation; many men unquestionably were enabled to realize enormous fortunes; the apparent augmentation of the value of produce causing speculations, which again really added to the apparent demand. This process also made the meat it fed on. As the profits of the enormous loans and government contracts, and of the multiform speculations accompanying these, accumulated in the hands of lenders to government, stock-jobbers, contractors, and merchants of various grades, this accumulated money became in its turn the means of greater speculative transactions; and as the continued and at last rapid depreciation of the currency tended to sustain prices throughout, these adventures were generally successful, and the parents of further enterprise. All this impressed ordinary spectators with the idea of a great national prosperity, few minds being at all aware of the fictitious and delusive nature of much that they beheld.

This career of real and apparent gain was not, how-

ever, without its collapses and its perils. The frequent occupation of a large portion of the European continent by the armies of France caused occasional impediments to the foreign trade of Great Britain, upon which an increasing portion of her now rapidly increasing population was beginning entirely to depend. From these causes arose often-recurring pressure, stagnation of trade, and consequent discontent amongst those whose means were cramped, and whose wages were suspended.

Nor was agriculture without its share of attendant evils, despite the gradual and great advance in the nominal values of all farming produce, which made the fortunes of many farmers who were lucky enough to have long leases of their lands. To balance these advantages, there were counteracting disadvantages. Amongst the farm-labourers, the action of the depreciated currency had created privation rather than the contrary. The wages of yearly labour did indeed advance, though hardly in the ratio of the depreciation of the money in which they were paid, or of the advance in all the necessaries of life which they were to purchase. The wages, however, of occasional labourers, such as reapers in harvest, and women and children, did not advance in an equal degree; and hence the condition of the husbandman and his family was in reality somewhat deteriorated during the apparent prosperity which existed throughout the great part of the period of hostilities with France; and besides this, another evil to the poorer portion of the rural community, arose out of the operation upon the

currency now in progress, of which evil the landlord and farmer in course of time felt the rebound.

This evil was the enclosure and alienation of the common lands, and the consequent augmentation of poor-rates which was caused by that alienation. These lands, which amounted to fully *eight millions of acres*, were, under the feudal system, the great common pastures enjoyed in common by all the holders of farms under the manorial lords. On the breaking up of that system, these common-pastures were abandoned by the more wealthy landholders to the *villeins*, or persons holding cottages and small patches of land by favour of personal services. These persons built cottages on the margins of these great pastures, and this was the origin of the rural townships and the township-commons, which included some of the finest pasture-lands in England. These commons were a resource for the poorer portion of the population, who put upon them cattle (chiefly milch-cows), sheep, and geese; and this resource they enjoyed without interruption, until the Revolution of 1688, by the change which it wrought in the taxation and social habits of the English people, made these lands, in the reign of Queen Anne, an object of desire to the owners of the estates which bordered upon them. Tillage was now rapidly superseding the grazing system, which up to the accession of the Stuarts had prevailed. The rents of land had indeed risen with the almost imperceptible and gradual depreciation of the metals which took place after that period. But after the change in the financial system which accompanied the Revolution of 1688,

the expenses of living increased more than commensurately with the rise in rents; and landlords, whose estates are almost invariably burdened with fixed charges, began to feel narrowed in their circumstances. This led to the first enclosure acts, three of which were passed, and assented to by Queen Anne; and the ground being thus broken, the alienation of these lands went on with an accelerating velocity, and, in the year 1809, had absorbed vast tracts, which tracts formed one of the resources of the rural poor.

To this cause, amongst others, must unquestionably be attributed the extraordinary growth of the poors rate, which had now begun to attract the attention of all thinking men, and which cannot, without taking into consideration the Enclosure Acts, be accounted for either by the increase of population which accompanied it, or by the attendant depreciation of the currency.

Thus, amidst an almost continuous advance in the prices of all commodities—amidst increasing trade and a rapid extension of the manufacturing system, there were still circumstances calculated to shake the confidence of thinking minds in the reality of all this apparent national prosperity; and these doubts had, in 1809, reached the House of Commons, where a party, who were now known as "the Economists," and who chiefly belonged to the opposition party, frequently controverted the financial measures and monetary maxims of the ministry. Thus, although at the period when Mr Peel entered the House of Commons, the old high Tory party, which comprised

at this time a great majority of persons connected with land and trade, were still in the ascendant, their power had reached its zenith, and amongst other symptoms of an approaching decadence, was the growing influence of the Economists, who, partly by means of the influence arising from their supposed knowledge of a science at that time most imperfectly understood and confined to a very few persons, and partly from the more healthy influence of their own great natural talents, now exercised a considerable and certainly dangerous power within the legislature —dangerous, because legislation upon general and abstract principles—questionable in themselves and imperfectly understood—is of all courses the most perilous for a nation; and because few maxims, of an abstract and general nature, are less capable of being proved to be at once true and salutary than many of those upon which the science of modern political economy is built.

Such was the position of parties when Mr Peel, having completed his twenty-first year, entered the House of Commons in 1809. Nor was his first appearance upon this arduous and trying stage of public aspirants without its difficulties. They who make light of the obstacles which beset men even of the greatest and most available abilities on their first entrance upon the arena of the House of Commons, unthinkingly do so. It may be true that the majority of that assembly may not be composed of men remarkable for great acquirements, brilliant talent, or ready eloquence. It may be true that they have often

underrated great men, and magnified little ones. It may be true that they are sometimes intolerant of opinions differing materially from their own, and far from nice in their modes of expressing feelings, always to be deplored in such an assembly, however expressed. Still, however, such is their influence upon public opinion, that the sentences passed upon candidates for fame within their walls are rarely, if ever, reversed out of doors. No man ever essayed to command the attention of the House of Commons and failed, without suffering commensurately in the opinion of the public. Hence, it has been observed that many of the most successful and powerful speakers in parliament have been remarkable for their caution and protracted silence on first breathing the atmosphere of the House of Commons.

This course, that prudence and tact which formed so prominent a feature of Mr Peel's character, induced him also to follow. On his entrance into St Stephen's Chapel, he found there some brilliant and some powerful orators with whom he was to contend; and he knew that trying collision was to take place before a judgment-seat, the decisions of which, however hasty or erroneous they possibly might sometimes be, were never set aside. On the side, also, which he espoused, there existed circumstances of difficulty quite sufficient to render timid a less cautious, cool, and circumspect person than the young member for the borough of Cashel. On the ministerial side of the House, the most showy and efficient orator was George Canning, then in the prime of life. He was

not, however, even then fully trusted, nor in fact to be, in all senses, relied upon by the minister, Perceval, a man unequal, in some respects, to his own situation. Mr Perceval, although a man of good business habits, and unflinching resolution and pertinacity of purpose, had owed his fortune less to commanding talent, than to a peculiarity of position with respect to the unfortunate Princess of Wales, whose confidential legal adviser he had been. Upon his lawyer-like method and dry perseverance, Mr Canning unquestionably looked down with some degree of pardonable contempt. This was not unnoticed by Mr Perceval, who, aware of the ambitious temper of his brilliant partisan, distrusted him accordingly, and communicated his distrust to the high Tory party, by the *élite* of whom Canning was never cordially liked, but whose policy Mr Perceval was ready and willing to carry out. These circumstances naturally caused a secret and tacit coolness, unknown to the public, between the premier and his ostensible subordinate, to which another circumstance added somewhat.

In the painful discussions, as to the conduct of the Princess of Wales which had taken place, Mr Canning had, in some degree, befriended the unfortunate lady, whose cause he never openly forsook, as did her confidential adviser, now prime minister. Thus, between the head of the ministry and Mr Canning, a mutual respect and confidence never existed; and between him and Lord Castlereagh, who was the firmest support of Mr Perceval, there was even less sympathy. Lord Castlereagh had, through life, been the drudge

of his party, and "the packhorse of their great affairs." For this his indomitable courage, his steady coolness, and his indefatigable perseverance, amply fitted him. But these were his only requisites. As an orator he was so deficient as to be almost contemptible; and of those lighter accomplishments, which aid every man who is to play a public part in a popular assembly, he was destitute. The showy Canning deeply felt the superior influence in the government which Lord Castlereagh exercised, and this led to a smouldering envy, which had nearly, soon after this time, broken up the disunited administration.

On the anti-ministerial side of the House the display of talent was greater. On those benches Richard Brinsley Sheridan still sat; and though the splendour of his senatorial ability was now rapidly waning, and dissipation and reckless extravagance had at once broken down his powers, and impaired his character and influence, he still, on all fitting occasions, could command the attention of the House, and when excited by debate, show little

"Less than archangel fallen."

By his side sat Tierney, a racy and effective speaker, and Whitbread, whose energy, ability, and honesty of purpose have never been rated at their full value. To these must be added Horner and Brougham, both young members, but bringing with them the fame of the Edinburgh Review, now in its zenith of popularity and success. Nor must we forget Charles

Grant and Romilly, amiable and eloquent, though less of partisans than the others: whilst with these might be sometimes seen joined Sir Francis Burdett, a gentlemanly speaker, and a man of pleasing address, but of extreme politics, and alone in the House of Commons, as at that period a disciple of John Horne Tooke and of William Cobbett was sure to be.

Against the talents and reputation of these men Mr Peel wisely was slow to measure himself; and there existed other reasons of force enough to convince the young member of the prudence of not too hastily seeming to aim at a conspicuous place as a debater and politician. The fact was, Sir Robert Peel, naturally and justly vain of the great talent and still greater accomplishments of his son, had made no secret of his aspirations with regard to him; and this drew upon young Peel occasional notice of a kind by no means pleasant to a youth just entering the arena of political life. To whatever heights the secret ambition of a statesman may point, to have such views prematurely divulged is one of the surest impediments to success; and it was evident that Mr Peel soon felt that his father's ill-judged anticipations as to the future were by no means calculated to help him forward to that future. Had he been the scion of an aristocratic stock, such anticipations, however mistaken their expression, would have attracted less notice; but from the first, Mr Peel felt that he was regarded by the heads of that party, of which he was one of the most accomplished members, as a *parvenu*, and that the same jealous exclusiveness which fol-

lowed the brilliant Canning to a premature grave, was destined to clog his career also. With Mr Peel entered the House of Commons a young man to whom this objection did not apply, and who, with more audacity, though perhaps less astuteness, and far less power of leading inferior minds, was destined to go through a career little less extraordinary than his own, and like him, too, perhaps to suffer more from the assaults of the friends with whom he entered upon political existence than from all the strategy of his enemies. This youth was Lord Palmerston, who, entering the House at the same time, now occupied the same benches with young Peel and his too prescient parent.

The first occasion on which Mr Peel seems to have addressed the House of Commons in a speech of any length, was in seconding the address at the opening of the session of parliament, January the 23d, 1810. This is a matter of routine always given to rising young men of the party which happens to be in power, from whom nothing is expected beyond at most a set of specious commonplaces, audibly and fluently delivered. In this task Mr Peel succeeded to the satisfaction of his friends, appearing all the more advantageously when contrasted with the mover of the address, Lord Bernard, who proved unequal to the task assigned him, probably from want of nerve rather than ability to go through a detail of the most ordinary kind. Another occasion, however, soon presented itself, which allowed him ample field for showing, that even in dealing with an unpopular

subject, he might yet rely upon the attention of those most adverse to him. This occasion was the long debate which arose out of a series of resolutions, moved by Lord Porchester, relative to the unfortunate expedition to the Scheldt, in which the total failure of that disastrous expedition was imputed to the ministry, who were accused of having undertaken it at a time when there was absolutely no rational expectation of success. Into the details of that most miserable failure it would be at present superfluous in every point of view to enter. At the time of its occurrence some difference of opinion, as to the conduct and policy displayed, might and did exist; but at this distance of time, when party feelings are cooled down, and the excitement of hostilities has disappeared, the judgment of history as to this ill-starred event is nearly unanimous. That, during the whole period of the long war with France, there existed great faults in the management both of the War-Office and the naval boards, those who have perused the despatches of the Duke of Wellington and the correspondence of Lord Collingwood will not be inclined to deny. To the officers engaged in the conflict they were perpetually apparent. The fatal expedition to the Scheldt, however, doubtless exhibited the shortcomings of these departments of the public service to an extent quite unprecedented.

Towards the end of the debate on the resolutions condemnatory of this ill-advised enterprise, Mr Peel rose to answer Mr Bathurst, and to defend the ministers. The side on which he spoke on this occasion was so unten-

able that it is no derogation to say that his defence was as unsatisfactory as those that had preceded it. It is not easy to see how this expedition, supposing it to have sailed at the critical time, prior to the occupation of Vienna by Napoleon, could have operated as a diversion in favour of Austria and against France when the forces on both sides were so enormous. The appearance of an English fleet with a few thousand troops on board, even at Antwerp, could hardly have alarmed the French so much as to alter the plan of the campaign. Had it left the British ports six months sooner, under the conduct of courageous and active commanders, it certainly might have done good service in the capture or destruction of the French fleet in the Scheldt, and in the destruction of the naval arsenals. As it was, these were left unassailed, and thousands of lives wasted in the useless siege of Flushing, and the needless occupation of the pestiferous swamps of Walcheren, after the eventful campaign which ended in the murderous conflict at Wagram was really decided. In fact, Mr Peel's defence seemed to consist in describing to the House the indignation which would have been felt had ministers shrunk back on learning that the forts of Lillo and Liefkenshoeik were in a state of defence; and in asking if it would have been honourable to desert Austria after her misfortunes, whilst we were prepared to assist her when the issue still was dubious? These questions, however answered, still left unreplied to the real point of the accusation, which was, that all these dilemmas were created by the in-

capacity of the executive, who sent out an armament when success was impossible and reverses certain. In short, the argument resolved itself into this, on Mr Peel's part, that it was better to send out an expedition to fail than not to send it at all—a proposition to which men in office may in extreme cases perhaps assent, but which can hardly command that of anybody else. The ministers on this occasion only saved themselves by a majority of twenty-three, so strong was the feeling of the House on this calamitous matter. The speech of Mr Peel must, however, have raised him in the estimation of those who heard him. Vulnerable its argument certainly was, but not more so than half the arguments that preceded it; and its delivery, at that late period of the debate, exhibited a nerve and self-possession that many must have envied.

The termination in favour of ministers of this debate, the event of which, at one time, seemed very dubious, put an end to the excitement into which the disasters in the Scheldt and in the marshes of Holland had plunged the nation. The session was, however, productive of another event, which, though it received little attention from the public, was in reality of paramount public importance, and in all human probability helped not a little to influence the future course of the young statesman who witnessed it. This event was the production and subsequent printing of the report, with the evidence on which it was founded, of the celebrated committee known under the name of "the Bullion Committee." This committee, which was composed nearly altogether of per-

sons belonging to the section of the Economists, although sitting on both sides of the House, had been silently acquiesced in by ministers in 1809, about the time of Mr Peel's entrance within its walls as a member. It was composed of the following members :— Francis Horner, Esq. (Chairman) ; The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, (Chancellor of Exchequer) ; The Right Honourable Geo. Tierney ; Earl Temple ; Honourable T. Brand ; H. Parnell, Esq. ; D. M. Magens, Esq. ; G. Johnstone, Esq. ; D. Giddy, Esq. (in the room of the Right Honourable G. Rose who declined) ; W. Dickinson, Esq. ; H. Thornton, Esq. ; The Right Honourable R. B. Sheridan ; The Right Honourable Charles Long ; A. Baring, Esq. ; W. Manning, Esq. ; R. Sharp, Esq. ; P. Grenfell, Esq. ; J. L. Forster, Esq. ; T. Thomson, Esq. ; J. Irving, Esq. ; W. Huskisson, Esq. ; The Honourable J. Abercromby. Of these twenty-two gentlemen, the Chairman and Messrs Tierney, Parnell, Baring, Grenfell, and Huskisson, and perhaps Mr Sheridan and Mr Brand, may be designated as belonging to the school of Economists. Of the remainder of the committee some were bank-directors and others merchants, but unconnected with the bank.

There cannot be a doubt in the mind of any reflecting person who calmly reviews the salient features of his subsequent career, that the mind of the younger Peel must have been deeply impressed by the report now laid before the House by this celebrated committee, although to the opinions of its leaders and of a majority of its members his

father was perhaps more decidedly opposed than any man in the House of Commons. The report was long, but in most of its reasonings and statements very able, considering the deplorably defective state of knowledge of the science of money at that period. Before this committee were examined directors of the Bank of England, private bankers, cambists, merchants, bullion-dealers, bullion-brokers, bill-brokers, and persons almost of every grade directly connected with banking and mercantile transactions, to the number of thirty; and to those who at the present day are at the pains to peruse these proceedings, the ignorance of the most ordinary phenomena of currency, displayed by some of the principal witnesses, must appear surprising and startling.

The grand fact of the depreciation of the entire British currency at that time, arising out of the excessive issues of paper, principally in the shape of notes for one Pound, the report clearly and completely demonstrates. The evasion most relied upon by those who opposed or denied the theory of the depreciation of the paper-money, of which the currency now was almost entirely composed, was, that it was not the paper which had fallen, but the gold and silver which had risen, in value. This fallacy the report ably and thoroughly exploded. It demonstrated, in various ways, that there was not the slightest reason for supposing that the precious metals of the world had altered in exchangeable value, or would command a greater quantity of commodities than heretofore. It showed that the apparent premium upon foreign bills

in England arose, not from any scarcity of those bills —the balance of trade being generally in favour of Great Britain—but from the greater quantity of paper-money now needed to be equal in value to the silver or gold money in which these foreign bills were payable. And it proved, by various methods, that the continued rise in the price of bullion here, and the disappearance of the gold first, and next of the silver coinage, could not be accounted for by any state of the exchanges or by any necessity for remittances of coin abroad; but must be attributed solely to the continuous depreciation of our whole currency; which made it highly profitable to melt and to export the coin so melted, or sell it as bullion.

All this the Economists, by whom this most able document was drawn up, proved in a way quite irresistible :- and, had it stopped here, the report would have been perfect of its kind. But going further than this, the Economists fell into two mistakes, the first of which has been really the parent of consequences the most extraordinary; whilst from the second they reaped more discredit with the public than could easily in any other way have befallen them. The first of these errors was one which is still (strange to say) very prevalent. It is the fallacious supposition—than which nothing can be more erroneous—that the depreciation of the currency after 1797 was accurately indicated by the quoted prices of gold bullion during that long period which intervened betwixt the first bank-restriction (as the stoppage of cash-payments by the bank was adroitly called) and the termination of the

war. This error, which has been the fatal and besetting sin of the political economy of the House of Commons, was first committed by the bullion committee of 1809; and enormous is the mischief of which it has been the occasion. This will be sufficiently apparent in the course of this biography, and needs not here to be further insisted upon.

The second error of Mr Horner's committee was the recommendation embodied in their report to return to cash-payments at the Bank of England, and of course everywhere else, in two years; although the desperate struggle in which the nation was then engaged might in all human probability continue far beyond that time. It is inconceivable how men possessed of the talent and experience which were undoubtedly the share of many members of this committee, should concur in a recommendation so strangely rash. Of the fact of the gradual growth and depreciation of the paper circulation they were aware. They must also have known, as everybody else knew, that the war then raging was only on the part of Great Britain carried on by means of perpetual loans, to an extent staggering to the imagination of all who set themselves to inquire from what sources all this apparent surplus of wealth was derived. Mr Horner and his friends could hardly fail to perceive that this surplus arose from the continued multiplication of bank-notes, and that the profits derived from antecedent loans and contracts constituted the means for more loans and more contracts. Yet, having this knowledge, they proposed at all hazards to dry up

the only means by which this life or death struggle —for to this it had nearly arrived—could be maintained. The consequence of this error was, that men who understood little or nothing of the question then under debate, instinctively as it were, revolted from a proposal so extraordinary; and the credit of the Economists received a shock, from the effects of which they were only preserved by the folly of their ministerial opponents, who were quickly seduced into a step equally ill-considered and absurd.

The party of Economists were not long in perceiving how the case stood. They felt that the impression produced everywhere by the rash proposal to return to cash payments in the midst of the desperate struggle with France, which could only be supported by means of a multiplication of bank-notes, was decidedly against them. An ordinary instinct taught all dealers in money how suicidal this proposal was. When Mr Horner therefore, in 1811, proposed to the House to adopt the report presented at the close of the session of 1810, he very prudently used every argument that might seem to soften that rash recommendation, although he still persisted in the proposal of a return to cash payments at the expiration of two years, instead of the period fixed by the bank restriction acts; to wit, that the bank should return to metallic payments within six months after a definitive treaty of peace. He failed, however, to conciliate the House, who, at the instigation of the ministry, declined by large majorities the adoption of the whole of the resolutions of Mr Horner and the committee. This mode

of negation, however, would not content Messrs Vansittart and Rose, who had from first to last opposed every idea of any depreciation of the currency; and this led to a proposal infinitely more opposed to truth, knowledge, and common sense, than any which had emanated from the Bullion Committee. Mr Vansittart, in short, determined to obtain from the House, in the teeth of all the facts elicited and explained by Mr Horner and his committee, a direct denial of the existence of any depreciation of the currency, had the hardihood to propose the adoption of a set of counter-resolutions, the third of which appears, and probably was intended, to negative the existence of any such depreciation.* These resolutions were affirmed by the House on a division on an amendment, by eighty-two members against forty-two; nine-tenths of those who voted being probably destitute of any clear ideas on a subject naturally so intricate, and now still more confused by the fallacies or evasions of the debates which preceded this division.

The third resolution of Mr Vansittart, as it stands, does not amount to a real denial of the depreciation of the whole currency, as asserted by the report of the Bullion Committee, nor does its admission in the slightest degree negative the depreciation of

* "3. That the promissory notes of the said company have hitherto been, and are at this time, held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such, in all pecuniary transactions to which such coin is lawfully applicable."—*Mr Vansittart's Resolutions*, May 13, 1811.

the paper money. Its argument is, because a bank-note for one pound and a shilling would go as far in the purchase of commodities as a guinea in gold, therefore the paper was not depreciated. The House ought to have known that the true answer to that was, that the coin, as coin, was depreciated together with the bank-note, forming as it did a part and parcel of the same redundant currency. As bullion, however, it was worth much more than the bank-note; a light guinea, which could be legally melted, selling notoriously for twenty-seven shillings in paper at that very time. The House, however, adopted the resolution, and with the public the resolution passed as a negative of the depreciation contended for by Mr Horner. On this occasion the two Peels voted with the government, although they saw it necessary at the same time to pass an act imposing heavy penalties for selling coin at more than its nominal value: under what precise view of the question they so voted, it is not easy to say. Sir Robert Peel, it is evident, viewed, in common with most of the advocates of an inconvertible paper-money, depreciation, if slow and gradual, as an actual benefit. His son could hardly at that period have formed any definite notions on the subject; and probably voted merely as a general supporter of the Perceval administration. That even then, however, the reasonings of the Bullion Committee had begun to take possession of his mind, seems to be probable, when we look at the acts of his after-life. That the united ministerial and paternal influence should at this crisis

prevail for the moment, is, however, no subject for wonder; and Mr Peel accordingly forms, together with his father, Sir Robert, a part of Mr Vansittart's majority on the bank-note depreciation question. The year 1819 was doomed to behold a very different spectacle.

However complete might be the triumph of the ministry over the Economists on a division of the House, those which took place respecting the ill-fated expedition to Walcheren had too manifestly demonstrated their weakness. Some accession of talent was palpably necessary: and it had further become evident, that it was advisable to cultivate the confidence of the manufacturing class by giving office, if possible, to some one connected with manufactures and the locality in which they were carried on. The mercantile interest of Sir Robert Peel was extensive, and the premier, already aware of the steadiness of character and practical talent possessed by his son, found in the younger Peel that which he wanted, a steady and diligent subaltern, connected by birth and fortune with the manufacturing class. To Mr Peel, therefore, Mr Perceval was induced to offer, in 1811, the place of under-secretary to the colonies, which was ultimately accepted by him. As under-colonial secretary at that period, Mr Peel knew that he had no insuperable difficulties with which to contend. Despite of the prostration of the greater part of Europe before the victories of Napoleon, and the attempts of the conqueror to destroy the power of Great Britain by starving her commerce and com-

mercially insulating her from Europe, the colonies were yet flourishing. The final encounter off Cape Trafalgar had, some years before, rung the knell of the French navy, and made Great Britain undisputed mistress of the seas. Her colonies were therefore unassailable by the enemy, and to those which she possessed, at the commencement of the conflict in 1793, she had added most of those possessed by France. In the East Indies, the Mauritius had just fallen into her power; and Napoleon, having sold Louisiana to the American republic, France was almost literally without a colony in either hemisphere. Of colonial produce the British had, therefore, now an almost complete monopoly; the island of Cuba being the only colony exporting such produce now left to Spain; the Brazils being little more than a refuge for the exiled princes of Portugal, and the Danes and Dutch possessing only three or four insignificant rocky islands in the West Indian Archipelago; nor could all the power of the conqueror shut out this produce from the continent of Europe. Lines of custom-houses and cordons of *douaniers* were vain. The sugar and coffee of the West Indies, conveyed under neutral flags, could not be shut out, because for these articles efficient substitutes could not readily be found. This was not the case, however, with cotton fabrics. For these substitutes are easily found. Their apparent cheapness is in fact their almost sole recommendation, and this is much more in appearance than in reality. The Berlin and Milan decrees of Napoleon, therefore, were now producing

great distress and greater discontent in the cotton manufacturing districts, to which the continent of Europe for the most part, was now an inaccessible place. During a crisis not very dissimilar, Mr Pitt had already afforded a precedent for the interference of government; and at the instance of Sir Robert Peel, this precedent was now followed by the Perceval administration. Large loans of exchequer bills were made to such great manufacturers and merchants as could offer valid security for such assistance; and to the honour of British commerce, these advances were in almost every instance punctually and entirely repaid.

There were, however, other and less transient difficulties, with which the ministers were to struggle; and the chief of these was the critical position of Spain, in the opinion of most persons, and especially in the opinion of those whose business it was to find out topics of objection and despondency calculated to embarrass the existing government. The character of the people of Spain being, even at this time, far less known and understood than that of any other European people, it is no matter for wonder that the resistance to the ambitious schemes of the Emperor Napoleon, still carried on within the Spanish peninsula, should, to most minds, appear entirely hopeless at this particular period. In all human calculation, Napoleon now seemed to be (with the sole exception of these islands) master of Europe. Austria was crushed in the dust; Prussia was almost erased from the list of powers; and the lesser German princes, such as the kings of Saxony, Bavaria, Westphalia, and

Wurtemberg, were yoked to the triumphal car of the victor. Russia, humiliated and exhausted, was compelled, unwillingly, to stoop to a hollow and sulky acquiescence in the designs of the great soldier. Spain, alone, desperately held out, aided by England; but, to all ordinary apprehension, to hope for the salvation of Europe through Spanish chivalry, seemed more Quixotic than even Quixote himself. The British cabinet came to a different conclusion. Whether knowledge, or obstinate resolution, or a union of both, was their prompter, cannot be known; but be the motive power what it might, their decision was as right as it was fortunate. Those who despaired of the issue of the conflict in Spain were, for the most part, ignorant of the peculiarities of that most beautiful of countries, and of those of its population. In a strategical point of view, Spain is one of the strongest of realms. It may be said to be a tissue of smaller countries, each differing from the other in the habits and resources of the population of each, and divided from each other, for the most part, by sierras, or chains of mountains of a most impracticable character; the passes of which may be guarded by a few resolute men to whom their intricate topography is known. These mountains are, however, intersected by valleys of the most fertile and lovely character. And the heat of the climate, which approaches that of Africa, being tempered by the constant lofty altitudes of the land, and by the many streams to which the ranges of mountains give rise, Spain thus becomes a realm in which the products both of the torrid and temperate zones may co-exist.

Thus, Spain at once produces the finest fleeces, the finest grain, the finest oil, and the strongest and most nourishing wines in the world. Thus, whilst at the foot of the mountains the vine and the olive flourish exuberantly, and the orange, in all its varieties, blooms everywhere, the higher and cooler plains produce abundant grain of the very choicest quality; and amid the sheltered recesses of the elevated ridges, herds of cattle, goats, and sheep producing the celebrated merino fleece, may be increased to an incalculable extent; for amidst these regions streams of water abound, and groves of immense cork-trees overshadow their course as they approach the hotter valleys towards which they make their way.

The general character of the race inhabiting this romantic and lovely realm is as marked and as extraordinary as the region which they occupy. The Spanish people is, no doubt, one of the greater fragments of that ancient race which, at some unknown period, possessed the whole European continent with its islands, but which now only exists, in fragments, in those retreats which have afforded these remains an asylum from the arms of the stronger, more acquisitive, and more practical races that have driven them from their former possessions. The chief of these is Spain; the peninsular form and immense military strength of the country having baffled the Teutonic invaders who easily overran the more level and accessible districts. The remote and insular position of Ireland has also preserved the Celtic nation within its shores; and their remains probably exist, though with

more of mixture, in the more mountainous parts of France and Italy, in Switzerland, in the Tyrol, and the island of Sicily, as they unquestionably do in Wales and in the highlands of Scotland. The leading character of this race is very strongly marked. Its grand characteristic seems to be, that in the Celt the passionate and imaginative predominate over the rational and the practical; — mere ratiocination amongst the Celts being the exception and not the rule. With the Teutonic races, by whom they have been supplanted, the reverse seems to hold. With this division the practical and reasoning faculty predominates over the feelings, the fancy, and the imagination; and imaginative and impulsive men are the exceptions to the leading peculiarities of the race.

Now, it seems to be a universally admitted fact that man cannot cultivate all his faculties to their full perfection. When one is pushed to its height, another must languish. Hence it is observable that the growth of literature very often seems to follow as a consequence the loss of political liberty by a people. Thus, Roman literature flourished after the subversion of the republic by Cæsar; the literature of France found its spring in the despotism of Louis XIV.; and that of England only became conspicuous after the establishment of a power all but arbitrary by the Tudors. Shut out from political power and the intense mental excitement which attends it, the human mind, ever active, is forced into the direction of letters; and the luxury amongst the privileged orders of a monarchy, which forms one of its necessary accompaniments,

tends to cherish and perhaps to refine that literature. In the Celtic races this truth is sufficiently exemplified. By temperament addicted to the romantic and the poetical, rather than to the homely and the practical, they have never, in any case, been enabled to form a complicated representative government. They have invariably exhibited the spectacle of a nation, geographically one, broken up into a collection of septs, tribes, or clans, under independent chieftains, differing in manners, customs, laws, and dialects, and often hostile to each other. Even in Spain, in which the finest specimens of the Celtic character are unquestionably to be found, this characteristic partially exists up to the present time. The Portuguese is opposed to the Spaniard, both in feeling and language. The Basque provinces differ from the other Spanish provinces in language, laws, customs, manners, and character; whilst the other provinces essentially differ from each other. Hence, it has happened that though, since the expulsion of the Moors, Spain has, in appearance, had a central government, the power and influence of that government, even under Charles V. and Philip II., have been very imperfect, and the bulk of the Spanish people has set it at a sort of defiance rather than been ruled by it. The central government has never been able to tax the Spanish people to any extent. In the northern provinces they have never suffered the central government to collect taxes at all, beyond a customry assessment which never varies; and whilst these remain untaxed, it is impossible to levy heavy taxes from the rest. Thus,

Spain, though in appearance despotically governed, has been really the freest country in Europe; although it is a freedom that deprives Spain of all political influence as part of the great European family. Whilst the central government drew a large revenue from Spanish America, and the gold and silver of Peru and Mexico poured into the exchequer of Madrid, the King of Spain and the Indies was powerful abroad; but when the former ceased the latter died.

This singular position, politically considered, arises out of the character of the Spanish Celt. He is romantic, poetical, and religious by temperament; but he is contented with moderate means, and is the reverse of acquisitive. Hence he is averse to that which in modern phrase is styled "progress;" he is attached to ancient custom, law, and habit; and prides himself on the deeds of his ancestors rather than on his own. Contented with little; moderate, and frugal and plain in his manner of living, and averse to exertion; he will not suffer any government to infringe on his means, being well aware that taxation and toil are convertible terms to those who must pay the first, and have no surplus wealth from which to pay. Hence the northern provinces of Spain have never been brought to tolerate a custom-house officer, and had rather be supplied by smugglers; preferring bad roads, an absence of police, and the presence of occasional banditti, who with smuggling mix robbery, to the alternative of having the necessaries and comforts of life abridged by the exaction of the officer of customs. Like all other branches of the Celtic race,

he sweetens a rude political system, and a life of comparative poverty, with romance, poetry, and the displays of a gorgeous religion, sometimes conducted with a taste that, by any one but himself, would be felt to border upon the ludicrous or the contemptible. Not performing in a week the amount of mental or bodily labours gone through within the twenty-four hours by an English tradesman or artisan, he is satisfied with a diet as little luxurious as theirs. Fruit, the ordinary wine of the country, eggs, poultry, the oil of the olive, and coarse bread, varied occasionally with ill-fed beef or mutton or kid, together with the constant use of garlic as a condiment, form his fare, not forgetting the recurrence to a little salt-fish, if fresh be not procurable, for fast-days; and his leisure hours he divides between the siesta, the promenade, the theatre, the gambling-house or coffee-house, and the church, the youngsters enlivening the routine with the evening dance or midnight serenade. The union of the Spanish and Portuguese provinces under their respective crowns has certainly precluded the intestine quarrels which, as in ancient Ireland, were the bane of ancient Hispania; but that is nearly all. In all else the Spanish peninsula presents the same anomalous spectacle of barbarism, romance, gallantry, and bigotry, that appear blended in the pages of Cervantes and Le Sage. They advance nothing—not even their population, which the rough plenty and ease of their mode of life tends to keep stationary. Hence Spain, with an area equal to that of France, and fertile beyond com-

pare, is not supposed to contain more than eight millions of persons of all ages, from whom their government is unable to extract, in the shape of taxes, more than three millions sterling English money, the remainder of the five and a-half millions, which form the revenue of modern Spain, being derived from their last remaining colony—Cuba.

That a people like this, placed in a country of great military difficulty, should successfully and triumphantly resist the discipline of the armies of France, and even the gigantic genius of the Emperor Napoleon, was by no means impossible in the apprehension of those who understood the Spanish character. The Spaniard had been, from time immemorial, imbued with a mortal antipathy to his French neighbour. This ancient grudge and habitual dislike, the events of the Revolution of 1789, and the conduct of Napoleon's armies, now attempting to crush resistance by overwhelming force, had vastly increased. Naturally detesting the infidel philosophy, the versatility, frivolity, and innovating tendencies of the Gallic nation, the people of Spain were now exasperated to the uttermost by the cruelties and rapacity of their invaders, and the threatened plunder of their church, which in Spain has always cherished, sided with, and been supported by the people. The treacherous and unprincipled mode of the aggression of Napoleon had also disgusted, to the last degree, a romantic, brave, and chivalrous population. He had not, on this occasion, acted in his usual daring and overt manner; but rather like the Danish usurper, as

"——a cut-purse of the empire and the rule,
Who, from a shelf, the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket!"

Possessing himself of the persons of the miserable Charles VI. and his son by the lowest treachery, he forced them to abdicate the Spanish crown, by means of obscure threats, and a system of intimidation of the vilest description; and by thus engrafting meanness on ambition, outraged the best feelings of the high-spirited and honourable part of the Spanish nation to the last degree, and gave to his victims an exaltation which they never could otherwise have obtained, by thus lowering himself.

All this Mr Peel seems to have viewed in its true light, without over-estimating the advantages to be derived from this—perhaps the greatest error the Emperor Napoleon ever committed. Mr Peel saw that, however desperate in appearance the Spanish struggle against the armies of France might be, the strength of the country, and the peculiar feelings and manners of its population, gave assurance that the conflict, if aided by Great Britain, must be a very protracted one. It had been long before said, by a general inferior only to Napoleon in military tact, that "if you go to Spain with a large army you are starved; if with a small one, you are beaten;" and the truth of this pointed sentence the French marshals were now feeling. They had occupied, indeed, Spain with their troops; but they were only really masters of the ground upon which these troops stood. In the open field, the Spanish forces, however brave, were

powerless against French discipline backed by French impetuosity and self-confidence; but victories in the field availed nothing. The Spaniards, though beaten, were never dispirited. If resistance was momentarily put down in one province, it arose in another. The armies of Napoleon were enveloped by clouds of irregular or guerilla warriors, who, guided by the smugglers who penetrate every part of Spain, and frequently led by their priests, who throughout fought with the people, harassed the French armies by night and by day, drove off the cattle, carried off the grain, and cut off in great numbers the enemy's foragers who were sent to recapture these necessary supplies. The consequence of this state of things was, that the plans of the most skilful of Napoleon's lieutenants were frustrated and baffled; and the British General, Wellington, with inferior numbers, but with a command over supplies which his French opponents could not obtain, was enabled by superiority of movement to attack and beat them in detail wherever the numbers were equal.

This Mr Peel seems to have seen and understood, and he was aware of the soundness of that calculation of chances which, assuming the certainty at all events of a protracted warfare, counselled the continuance of a conflict for English objects on Spanish ground, in order that England might take advantage of those vicissitudes which the ambition and exigencies of a man bent on universal dominion were sure to create or to encounter. These views he laid before the House, in a speech which, considering it was his first of any

length spoken in the House of Commons, and on a subject not only hackneyed, but in some sort unpopular, so hopeless at that period seemed the war, made a favourable and perhaps unexpected impression upon his auditory, and afforded a proof of talents which, by the party to which Mr Peel was attached, were now much needed. The country was at this moment suffering under the effects of Napoleon's Berlin and Milan decrees. The distress amongst all connected with manufactures and foreign commerce was very considerable, and where distress extensively exists, no ministry can be popular and powerful. Mr Perceval, consequently, now somewhat aware of the parliamentary ability of the younger Peel, and alive also to the necessity of conciliating the good-will of a family so largely connected with manufactures, now pressed upon Mr Peel the office of Under-Secretary to the Colonies, which he accepted. During the short period of his possession of this office, Mr Peel was not led to take any remarkable part in the debates of the Commons.

The prominent topics for discussion were the war, now carried on single-handed against the mighty resources of the French emperor, and about to be extended across the Atlantic, and the national distress arising out of the exclusion of British goods from the European continent. Colonial questions were, at this particular period, of minor importance and little attended to. Next to the French war and the domestic difficulties, the difficulties which arose out of the stringent exercises of the right of search were most im-

portant in the public eye. The British orders in council, which were retaliatory of the pretended blockade of England by the Emperor Napoleon, were now beginning to give umbrage to the republic of North America, under whose neutral flag a lucrative commerce had for some time been carried on. The heart-burnings necessarily arising out of the rigorous exercise of the right of search were probably inflamed still more by the reckless mode in which this right was acted upon by British naval officers, and especially by the impressment of seamen, really denizens of the United States, which frequently accompanied these searches. These unhappy acts led shortly after to that lamentable war with the United States which finished so disastrously in 1814. In these complications, however, the West Indian Colonies were not mixed, nor was there anything in the state of our possessions in the East that at that period attracted great public attention. There was therefore little or nothing of public duty calling upon Mr Peel, during his short connexion with the Colonial Office, to become conspicuous as a debater in the House of Commons; and an event was shortly to happen, which, in its consequences, put Mr Peel into a position of much more importance, but of triple difficulty.

In one peculiar point of his character, Mr Perceval was particularly unfitted to be in power during critical and dangerous times. His temperament and education led him, in truth, to be an alarmist minister, than which no minister can be more dangerous at an unsettled period, because fear for the most part

impels men into more questionable courses than do even the darker passions. This was Mr Perceval's misfortune. The great difficulties of the time had created extensive and severe commercial distress, and thousands were deprived of employment who could not have any clear idea of the causes of the pressure under which they were perhaps the greatest sufferers. Such persons not being themselves to blame for the want of employment, which starves them, are naturally inclined to blame their rulers for evils which no imprudence of their own has caused. By a magnanimous minister, a state of affairs like this is viewed in its true light. It may cause him pain, but not surprise; and he meets it by alleviating, as far as possible, those sufferings which he cannot cure, and by sympathizing with those for which either alleviation or cure may be, for the moment, impracticable. He takes every necessary precaution to preserve the peace; but he makes every allowance for those ebullitions arising out of intense suffering, which sometimes end in a breach of it. Unhappily Mr Perceval's mind was not of this cast. Like most timid and narrow-minded persons, he attributed to incendiaries and evil-disposed persons that appearance of disaffection which natural causes evolved. He was not aware that, although evil-disposed persons and incendiaries take advantage of national distress to excite discontent, they are powerless unless real suffering exists and to a great extent, and that the safe course is to sympathize with and alleviate the pressure, and not to treat every complainant as an incendiary.

Swayed by the premier, the conduct of government was at this period ill judged. They ought to have been aware that the coarse but shrewd character of the English people given by Robert Cecil to James I. was, to a certain extent, correct, and that no people are more easy to govern, as long as they are kept in that moderate ease in their circumstances of life which every man not vicious, under a reasonable government, has a right to expect.* Not reflecting, on the contrary, that the existing discontent, so far from being the product of a rebellious temperament, was the creature only of distress, not expected and not understood, and therefore to be treated with anodynes and sedatives rather than stimulants or repellents, the ministers met popular complaining with mere displays of force, which are more often the causes than the correctives of breaches of the peace. Not content with stationing large bodies of troops in the northern manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and indeed in every part of the kingdom where the population was dense, Mr Perceval began to distrust the metropolis itself, where the excitement caused by the existing pressure on trade began to be much aggravated by the disputes relative to the treatment of the unfortunate Princess Caroline of Wales.

In consequence of these feelings, the Premier, to

* Cecil, afterwards Earl of Salisbury, told him on his coming to the crown, that "he should find his English subjects like asses, on whom he might lay any burden, and should need neither bit nor bridle but their asses' ears."—*Catharine Macaulay's History of England.*

whom open displays of force were always most acceptable, had meditated and projected the erection, in that part of the precincts of London now known as the Regent's Park, of a military establishment of a very extraordinary character. It was to be a permanent barrack of extensive area, and of massive construction, capable of resisting any irregular siege, and calculated to accommodate an imposing force, not only of infantry, but of artillery and cavalry, including stabling and provender for the horses, in order, as the premier expressed it, that it might be impossible by any sudden attack to separate them from their riders.

It was with the intention of moving a resolution in the House of Commons to empower him to carry this certainly ill-judged measure into effect, that Mr Perceval entered the lobby of the House on the evening of May the 11th, 1812. In the lobby at that moment were a considerable number of people, consisting of persons waiting there on various business and members entering the House, when their attention was suddenly drawn towards the door by the report of a pistol, and Mr Perceval was seen to stagger forward a step, and then fall on his side, after which he rolled upon his face. He was first raised by Mr William Smith, one of the members for Norwich, assisted by some others, and carried into the Speaker's chambers, where he was found to be quite dead, the fatal bullet having passed through the heart. In the meantime the confusion was extreme, and in the midst of it the assassin might have easily escaped, had he not

given himself up, which he did with perfect calmness, saying, when questioned as to accomplices, "It is a private quarrel." In the existing state of feeling at that period within and without the Houses, this extraordinary catastrophe was certain to produce consternation and excitement extreme, and such was the case. It was immediately noised all over London, and thence over the country, that Mr Perceval had been shot "by an emissary from Manchester;" and such was the exasperation at that time in several parts of England, that at more than one town the populace openly rejoiced at the news. Within the Houses the consternation and panic were intense. The Lords first adjourned, having passed a short address to the Regent. The House of Commons for near an hour was filled with persons of all grades, and order was with the greatest difficulty restored, until the House, following the example of the Lords, formally adjourned also. In the meantime, the conduct of the assemblage round the Houses was certainly such as to justify all sorts of misgivings. A coach having been procured, the officers of justice attempted to put the assassin into it for the purpose of conveying him to prison; but so obvious was the determination of those around to effect a rescue, that a troop of dragoons was brought, and it was only at one in the morning that he was lodged in Newgate.

The proceedings against the unfortunate wretch, who was clearly insane, were indicative of the vindictive spirit then unhappily abroad everywhere. The deed was committed on a Monday. He was tried

on the Friday following for murder, found guilty, and executed on the ensuing Monday,—a haste indecent in itself, and wholly inconsistent with justice. The unfortunate man, whose name was Bellingham, had been made insane by ruin, which he attributed to the injustice of the Russian government; and because the British ambassador at St Petersburg failed to make out a case in his favour, and redress was denied, he deemed himself justified in inflicting retribution upon Mr Perceval as minister. There was no time, however, given to procure witnesses to the actual state of his mind, and he suffered death in the most imperturbable manner, amidst cries of "God bless you, Bellingham!" which burst from numbers of excited spectators as he was turned off; so little moral effect had this ill-advised and indecent procedure.

This extraordinary murder produced, however, events more important than the death of its unfortunate victim. It at once broke up the administration, and occasioned the necessity for the formation of another, in which the family of Peel, in the person of Mr Peel, became now conspicuous. From that time Mr Peel became a prominent personage in the public eye, so rapid was the success of his undoubted talent.

CHAPTER III.

Lord Liverpool Premier—Catholic Agitation—Mr Peel Irish Secretary—Anomalous State of Ireland—Charlemont—Hood—Grattan—Prince Regent opposed to the Catholics—O'Connell—His Character—His Hatred to Peel—Mr Peel's real Sentiments at this Period—The Violence of O'Connell—Catholic Committee proclaimed illegal—Dissolves—Mr Grattan's Character—His Motion of 1813—Mr Wellesley Pole's Tergiversation—Mr Peel resists Mr Grattan's Motion—His Address—Its mixed Caution and Ability—Grattan obtains a Committee—Mr Peel's probable Views—Sir Henry Parnell's Motion of 1815—O'Connell's insulting Language—Mr Peel sends a Challenge to Mr O'Connell—The Duel is prevented.

THE political state of the country at the moment of the unexpected death of Mr Perceval was somewhat critical. The war, from its apparent hopelessness, and from the sufferings which it now brought in its train, was beginning to be unpopular. The principal seats of manufactures in the north had been the scenes of frequent riots and disturbances, arising out of a sudden cessation of employment; and the metropolis itself was by no means well affected towards the existing government. In Ireland, as usual, difficulties in England were accompanied by an increase of agitation.

On the announcement of the serious and almost hopeless nature of the King's illness, and the accession to the regency of the Prince of Wales, the hopes of the

Catholics, who were still subjected to many and very vexatious disabilities on account of their religion, ran very high. They confidently looked to the speedy accession of the Whigs to power. They had all along, for some reasons never very satisfactorily explained, reckoned upon the intention of the prince to yield all they claimed. The Whigs had, with more or less of sincerity, advocated the cause of emancipation for a considerable period, although to the triumph of Whig principles at the Revolution the most of the penal laws against papists must be attributed. With the Prince for Regent, and with a Whig administration, the Catholic body in both countries looked upon their cause as gained: but in these fond hopes they had been miserably disappointed. The Regent chose Mr Perceval to be his minister; and though by the chagrin of the disappointed aspirants to power various causes were assigned for this unexpected line of conduct—such as the denial for a time of full powers to the Prince, and his filial fear of retarding the recovery of his royal parent by any hasty change of servants—those who had most knowledge of courts saw that these excuses were mere makeshifts, by means of which the bitter truth was sought to be disguised.

On the sudden catastrophe of Mr Perceval, the more sanguine of the friends of the Catholics renewed their hopes. It was again believed by those who permitted their wish to be father to their thought, that the Whig party had again a chance for power; and negotiations between the Prince on the one hand, and Lord Grey and Lord Grenville on the other, were set on foot. Whether

these negotiations were ever sincere on the part of him who permitted them, cannot be known; but it is certain they soon failed, and were concluded by an overture to one or two of the Prince's more familiar friends of a former time, of a nature not very flattering to their supposed magnanimity. In short, it was proposed to more than one member of the Whig party to join the Tories, and, as "the Prince's friends," serve under Lord Liverpool. This, however, was too high a price to pay even for friendship; and upon Lord Liverpool it accordingly devolved to form an administration out of such aid as he could muster: no easy matter in the then political position of the country.

Amongst other rising young men of talent, his attention was attracted by Mr Peel, of whose aptitude for the routine duties of office he was already aware. By Mr Perceval, Mr Peel was put into the subordinate position of Under Secretary for the Colonies, which he had discharged at all events with credit to himself. But he had done more than this. In the earlier part of the session of the year of Mr Perceval's death, he had opposed Lord Morpeth's motion for a committee of the whole House to consider of the state of Ireland, in a speech of very considerable power, in which he accused the Catholics of impracticability in refusing to concede the little in their power, meaning the *veto* on the appointment of their bishops, a measure of which, however plausible its sound, it is not easy to perceive the real practical utility. It is not a little curious to remark by the way, that he concludes this his first speech on this vexed question with the avoid-

ance of any pledge as to the general question of further concessions to the Catholics. The words are these:— "In giving his vote, however, on the present occasion, he would by no means pledge himself with regard to the Catholic question, but merely give his negative to a motion which, in the present instance, was at least unnecessary." These words were uttered on the 3d of February 1812, about three months before the assassination of Mr Perceval. So far, however, was any one from suspecting him of faltering in those principles which in Ireland constituted "the Orangeman," that on the death of the premier, Lord Liverpool selected Mr Peel to be his secretary for Ireland,* a post

* The following is a list of the Liverpool administration as it stood at the opening of the session of Parliament, November 24, 1812:—

Earl of Harrowby.....Lord President of the Council.
Lord Eldon.....Lord High Chancellor.
Earl of Westmoreland.....Lord Privy Seal.
Earl of Liverpool.....First Lord of the Treasury.
Right Hon. N. Vansittart.....Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Viscount Melville.....First Lord of the Admiralty.
Earl Mulgrave.....Master-General of the Ordnance.
Viscount Sidmouth.....Secretary for the Home Department.
Viscount Castlereagh.....Secretary for Foreign Affairs.
Earl Bathurst.....War and Colonial Secretary.
Earl of Buckinghamshire.....President of the Board of Control.
Right Hon. Charles Bathurst..Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

NOT OF THE CABINET.

Right Hon. George Rose.....Treasurer of the Navy.
Earl of Clancarty.....President of the Board of Trade.
Right Hon. F. J. Robinson....Vice-President of ditto.
Right Hon. Charles Long...
Lord Charles Somerset.....} Paymasters-General of the Forces.

in which his great administrative capacity first became known, and into which he was now inducted on the formation of the Liverpool administration.

Thus was Mr Peel, in his twenty-fourth year, plunged into the stormy ocean of Irish politics—a fathomless whirlpool in which no modern adventurer has ever found soundings. It would be foreign to the purposes of this biography to endeavour at any great length to analyze and describe the causes of that unsatisfactory condition which has through so many centuries characterized Ireland. They probably lie much deeper than has generally been thought, and have their origin in the mistaken treatment from the first of a conquered but most exeitable race. If we look at the conduct of the greatest of conquerors, the Romans, we shall find they pursued two diametrically opposite modes of treatment of those who succumbed to their power. If they resolved to destroy the nationality of a people altogether, they acted as barbarians act. They extermnated those capable of resistance, and

Earl of Chichester.....	Joint Postmasters-General.
Earl of Sandwich.....	
Viscount Palmerston.....	Secretary at War.
Right Hon. C. Arbuthnot...	Secretaries of the Treasury.
Richard Wharton, Esq.....	
Sir William Grant.....	Master of the Rolls.
Sir Thomas Plumer.....	Attorney-General.
Sir William Garrow.....	Solicitor-General.
Duke of Richmond.....	Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.
Lord Manners.....	Lord High Chancellor.
Right Hon. Robert Peel.....	Chief Secretary.
Right Hon. W. Fitzgerald....	Chancellor of the Exchequer.

sold the remainder as slaves, leaving them no vestige of home or nationality. This was their course with the Carthaginians, who were so completely destroyed that no one can now certainly point out the spot where the city stood; nor does a word of their language, save a single line preserved in a play of Plautus, remain. When not desiring to extinguish nationality, the Roman conqueror took a course diametrically opposite. Those whom he would not destroy he studied to amalgamate. He preserved intact the property of the richer citizens who submitted. He adopted into the Pantheon the tutelar or other deities worshipped by the people. From the people he in time recruited his legions. He taxed them equally with the rest of the empire, respected their local customs, and left untried no device which might help to cultivate the feeling that thenceforward they were Roman provincials, and an integral part of the great Roman confederation.

Neither of these lines of conduct has the English victor pursued towards Ireland. Though strong enough to subdue the Irish race, he was not barbarian enough to exterminate them and their nationality together; but he has endeavoured to do it by means which, whilst they have failed in their immediate object, have altogether prevented that kindly amalgamation which might have made Ireland a source of strength, and not of weakness, to the empire. By a long series of confiscations, for which the intestine troubles created by them only afforded additional pretexts, he alienated the whole of the large Irish estates, and vested them in the hands of

powerful English families who neither resided amongst nor sympathized with the Irish people. When, by Henry VIII. and his successors, the principles of the Protestant Reformation were planted in England, these principles were endeavoured to be forced upon the Irish; who, stung by a sense of the injustice, have never submitted to the church thus imposed upon them, and which they are compelled to support by payment of tithes and church dues. That these arbitrary acts should, on the first good opportunity, be followed by reaction, was only a natural result; and when the Stuarts therefore in their turn attempted to re-impose the sway of Rome upon the British Protestants, James II. was supported in this rash attempt by his Irish Catholic subjects, who, resenting such treatment in their own case, inconsistently would have assisted to repeat it in the case of others. This reaction only caused more reaction; and the Irish rebellions against Cromwell and William III. served only to form the excuse for a set of penal laws not less cruel than the excesses of those rebellions had been.

The consequence of this long series of error has been clearly twofold. It has, in the first place, made the holders of the lands in Ireland so powerful that by union they have ever been too strong for any English minister who might see these evils, and attempt to redress them; and, in the next place, it has so imbittered party hostility in Ireland, that a public opinion has not been suffered to exist, much less to interpose to soften down the asperities of Protestant and Catholic. Public opinion is that general

sense of right and wrong which interposes between the passions of individuals and forbids their extremes. But in Ireland there has never been any such intermediate power possible; and, however individuals may deplore, they cannot there in the slightest degree check, the excesses of party bitterness. Nor has this unhappy state of affairs been alleviated by those concessions which the necessities of Great Britain in 1782 and in 1793 induced her to make to the claims of the Irish Catholics. These concessions seem only to have added strength and exasperation to the conflict, through the events to which they have given rise.

The spread of democratic opinions in Europe, after the first eruption of the volcano of the first French Revolution, did its work amongst an enthusiastic race like the Irish Celt. Irish nationality became a bright vision of the dreams of Protestant as well as Catholic; and Mr Pitt, then all-powerful, saw with dismay that the series of conspiracies, commencing after 1792, and resulting in the abortive but sanguinary convulsion of 1798, were of Protestant rather than of Catholic origin. It is probable that, after this terrible transaction, Mr Pitt dared no longer to trust an Irish parliament, even though composed of Protestants. The union was to be brought about at any price. By a combination of means, some of which will hardly bear inquiry, it was carried in 1800; and it has been asserted by persons likely to have known the truth, that, as the price of Catholic forbearance, complete emancipation was promised by the powerful minister. This promise, if ever made, was, from causes which

must probably remain for ever unknown, not kept; and at the period of Mr Peel's acceptance of the unenviable office of chief secretary for Irish affairs, the consequences of this real or supposed breach of faith were shaking Irish society to its lowest depths.

Twelve years had only then elapsed since the success of the struggle for the Union, and eight years only since the death of its author Mr Pitt: and now to the imputed tergiversation of the great minister on the subject of the Catholic claims was to be added the imputed tergiversation of the Regent. A change too had come over the torrent of Irish agitation. Hitherto the ostensible leaders of the advocacy of Catholic emancipation had been Protestants. Their possession of seats in the legislature naturally gave them this pre-eminence in the advocacy of the cause of toleration and the removal of all disabilities on account of religion. Thus Grattan, Flood, Charlemont, and Curran, were all Protestants; and being so, it is at least doubtful whether any one of these honourable and distinguished men, notwithstanding their devotion to the cause, ever had the full confidence of the Catholic priesthood or the entire sympathy of the Catholic laity. A man, however, had now shown himself amongst the ranks of Catholic agitation who was, ultimately, fated to acquire that confidence if ever layman possessed it. This was the justly celebrated Daniel O'Connell, now destined to play, through many years to come, the most conspicuous part upon the strange and troublous stage of Irish politics, and to become one of the most bitter and most

successful opponents of the youth who was now about to assume the uneasy post of the Irish secretaryship.

At the period when Mr Peel accepted the Irish secretaryship, Mr O'Connell was in what may be termed the first flush of manhood. He was endowed with every requisite for success as an agitator of Irish politics. Possessed of a striking, although not handsome person; of a voice one of the finest possible both in power and modulation; of great command of words grave or gay; of the power of passing at will from the persuasive to the vehement and sarcastic, from the humorous to the pathetic, and from the plaintive to the denunciatory; and adding to this great quickness, acumen, and a deep knowledge of law, together with a deeper knowledge of the character of those whom he addressed; Mr O'Connell had already scaled the dizzy heights of popularity, and even then took the lead in every popular assembly in which the claims of the Catholics were discussed. The same Celtic temperament which made him an ardent and most successful demagogue, gave him also another requisite, which to a man in his position was truly invaluable. Mr O'Connell was a sincere and ultra-zealous Catholic; and was apparently imbued with all the notions as to the exclusive excellence of his faith that are entertained by the unreasoning bigot and the reasonless devotee. This, whilst it recommended him strongly to the attachment of the Irish populace, obtained for him at length the implicit confidence of the Catholic priesthood; and upon this trust, reposed in him by the hierarchy of Catholic Ireland, he was

at length enabled to build up a power hardly equalled by any in the possession of a private individual of modern times.

At the moment of Mr Peel's accepting the office of secretary for Ireland, the bitterness of Irish agitation could hardly be surpassed: and the mere acceptance of this post was quite sufficient to draw down upon him the most envenomed diatribes of the Catholic party, amongst whom in all popular assemblages, Mr O'Connell now took the lead. Although Mr Peel had formally abstained from pledging himself against the Catholic claims in the abstract, it seemed to be at once taken for granted by the Catholic associators that he was to play an uncompromising anti-catholic part. No time was lost in affixing to him the vulgar nickname of "Orange-Peel." His defence of the ministry, with regard to the much-mismanaged and ill-fated Walcheren enterprise, was at once revived, as affording a happy augury of his career as an Irish secretary: and the anti-catholic bigotry of the young functionary was pointed at as one of the truest symptoms of the desertion of the course of liberality and religious freedom by the Regent; of whose entire tergiversation the advent to power of Lord Liverpool's ministry certainly afforded a sufficient proof, if further proof had been needed.

The passionate advocacy of political extremes has ever been the curse of society in Ireland. No man in Ireland has ever been allowed to be neutral; and that question must be a remote one indeed in which some

of the spirit of Irish political partisanship has not been mingled. The consequence of this is, that Ireland has ever been destitute of anything deserving of the name of public opinion. For upon neutral ground public opinion must rest, it being that influence of the calmer and more reflective portion of society which, whether wrong or right, for it is not infallible, interposes between the advocates of extremes in all public questions; and like the fly-wheel of a steam-engine, acting more by its weight than its activity, smooths and equalizes the motion of the social machinery, and gives time for that more calm and sobered reflection amidst which social changes can alone safely proceed. Had this public opinion existed and possessed organs in Ireland, it might have taught the leaders of the Catholic confederation that there was as little of good policy in taking it for granted that Mr Peel was under all circumstances an anti-catholic, as there was in mixing the cry of the repeal of the Union with that of the remaining Catholic disabilities, or in personally insulting the Regent by openly attributing his coldness to the Catholic cause to meretricious influence; forgetting that in Great Britain the personal will of the sovereign cannot form an ingredient in any public question, and as little determine the duration of a cabinet, whose existence, as English society is constituted, depends on far other elements than the mere caprice of the chief magistrate.

At this distance of time, when a calm and dispassionate view of the excitement of the period can

be taken, it seems sufficiently clear that Mr Peel by no means went to Ireland with an inclination to act with the extreme Orange party: and it is probable that even then, his mind, timid by nature and prone to distrust the duration of political arrangements, had begun to admit doubts of the possibility of resisting for an unlimited period the claims of a population rapidly growing in numbers, wealth, and influence. But moderation in a public man at that time in Ireland was an impossible supposition. Where all men take a side, the individual who shrinks is only regarded as a traitor by both extremes; and of this Mr Peel was quickly made aware. Had he attempted, under any circumstances, any association, however guarded, with the most moderate even of the popular party in Ireland, from that moment would he have been more than suspected by his friends and adherents: and this was no time for weakening the force of a government which, even upon this question, although constructed by Lords Liverpool and Eldon, exhibited unconcealed symptoms of division and disunion.

Mr Fitzgerald, the chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, was an advocate of the claims of emancipation, whilst the secretary was opposed to them in their existing shape: and it soon became a standing topic against the Irish government that its two principal officials were at variance upon the great question now agitating the country which they were to agree to help to govern. This was to a certain extent undoubtedly true, but there is no improbability in sup-

posing that even at this early period of his career Mr Peel's hostility to the demands of the Catholic party was much coloured by the elements amidst which he lived. On the question of Irish Education his conduct was never, from first to last, that of a bigot who merges everything in religious fanaticism. By making it a common ground on which the Catholic and the Protestant might meet in peace, he seems to have cherished the vain hope that some mitigation might be thrown upon the consuming heat of that *odium theologicum* which would recklessly leave the temporal welfare of a realm to perish amidst the spiritual conflict of opposing sectaries. To this insane species of warfare the calm and practical temperament of Peel was ever opposed. From his first entrance upon the tumultuous arena of Irish politics to the end of his life, he would, if he could, have quenched the fiercer polemics that consume their country amid their fires in the cooler element of practical and secular education: but this was far beyond his power. His encouragement of schools, where the strife of religious proselytism might be merged in the soberer pursuits of ordinary mental culture, was only attributed to lukewarmness by one party and to infidelity by the other; and by the diligence alone with which he sought to remedy the multiform abuses and total want of order which existed in the details of his own office did he gain credit in Ireland with either party. In all else, for his own party he was too temporizing, for the emancipationists too exacting.

To a man of Mr Peel's temperament the vehement

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and uncompromising character of Mr O'Connell's agitation must have been peculiarly obnoxious: whilst to a mind like that of O'Connell, fiery, enthusiastic, decisive and rapid in its conclusions, the cool, impassive, and calculating character of Peel must have been essentially repulsive. Such was the event: and from that hour to the end of O'Connell's extraordinary career they were bitter enemies. For Mr Grattan and the more moderate advocates of the cause of Catholic emancipation the feeling of the young Irish Secretary was manifestly much more tolerant. Whilst he opposed every attempt to relax the remaining disablities of which the Catholics complained, he very astutely so shaped his opposition as to make it appear, without seeming to wish to do so, that the failure of these attempts might be in a great measure attributed to the violence of their new and popular advocate. That the appearance of that proclamation which denounced the Catholic committee as illegal, and caused its dissolution and dispersion, was in some sort necessitated by the intemperate harangues of Mr O'Connell, was the general belief of the time; and this impression is partly borne out by the first elaborate speech against the Catholic claims delivered by Mr Peel,—a speech which stamps him as an orator of great address, though not equal to that higher style of speaking which is more emphatically termed eloquence.

At this time, the conduct of the agitation in favour of the claims of the Catholics within the walls of parliament was intrusted to Mr Grattan, a man

of whom Ireland had good reason to be proud. He was now in the wane of a life honourably passed in the service of his country. Deeply feeling the misgovernment of Ireland, and deprecating the multiform and shocking consequences of that misgovernment, he was not unaware of the weaker points of the national character, exaggerated as those characteristic faults have doubtless been by centuries of misrule; and hence, whilst he was ready and able to seize every opportunity to regain for the Irish people all the rights with which he deemed they might with safety to themselves and others be intrusted, he never countenanced for a moment the schemes of those fiery spirits who aim at a separation from England, and indulge in the vain dream and baseless vision of a Hibernian republic. Hence, although it was on the motion of Mr Grattan, who stood up in the Irish House of Commons in 1782 dressed in his volunteer uniform to make it, that the principal penal laws affecting the Catholics were repealed, he had nothing in common with such men as Jackson, Wolf Tone, Arthur O'Connor, Napper Tandy, Emmett and the Sheares, who some years later had so nearly plunged Ireland into the dreadful extremities of a civil war, exasperated by the intensest religious hatreds, and backed by the energies of revolutionary France, regardless of everything but national vanity and national ascendency.

By Mr Grattan even the proposal to repeal the Act of Union, about this time begun by Mr O'Connell in the agony of his disappointment at the con-

duct of the Regent, was felt to be impolitic in the extreme; and hence betwixt Mr Grattan and Mr O'Connell an ill-concealed coldness was already beginning to arise, which in after-times bore its natural fruit of dislike and alienation. These feelings on the part of Mr Grattan were more disinterested, because, in a personal sense, to the orators of the defunct Irish parliament the Act of Union had operated unfavourably. In the united parliament they found themselves, as it were, in a new element, to which they were unaccustomed. The style and tone of the assemblage were different; and this difference was not always in favour of the orator from Ireland. The obvious and natural consequences were, that some of the speakers of the Irish parliament failed to gain the attention of their new auditory; whilst others, in order to do so, gradually, and perhaps to themselves imperceptibly, adopted the prevalent tone of the British House of Commons. This change, however, whilst it smoothed their difficulties on one side, augmented them on the other. The constituent began to distrust the altered tone of the advocate; and moderation was interpreted into coldness, and suavity into submission. That even Mr Grattan was beginning to suffer somewhat from his transition across the Irish Channel was now beginning to be evident; and probably the events of the debate of 1813 did not tend to delay the wane of his influence amongst the more excitable portion of his fellow-countrymen.

Mr Grattan brought on his motion for a committee to take into consideration the claims of the Catholics

on the 25th February 1813; but it was preceded, on the 24th of February, by some slight ebullitions of temper, arising out of a charge made against the Irish government of having been secretly concerned in a publication which, whilst it pretended to set forth the injuries and injustice suffered by professors of the old form of religion, was in reality a gross and malignant libel upon both. This accusation Mr Secretary Peel, in behalf of the Irish government, indignantly rebutted, and the subject was dropped, after some warmth of expression had been on both sides indulged in. Mr Grattan's speech on this occasion was remarkable for its calmness and studied brevity. He began by stating, in terms studiously pointed and terse, the unreasonable and uncharitable nature of the petitions *against* the claims of Catholic English or Irish subjects, and the objectionable manner in which such petitions were for the most part obtained. Having briefly but pithily just touched this portion of his subject, he proceeded to show the futility and unfairness of the arguments relied upon by his opponents, upon which he enlarged to a greater extent. In his remarks on the anti-catholic meetings in Ireland, got together by the sheriffs of the counties, there was more of bitterness. It was, however, only a transient frown.

"I object, sir (said Mr Grattan in commencing), to the manner in which, in many instances in this country, and more particularly in Ireland, these petitions have been obtained. In Ireland they have been the consequence of a requisition to the sheriffs of the respective counties to call a meeting of 'the Protestant inhabitants.' Now, it appears to me exceedingly

objectionable for a public officer to call the people together *in sects,* and to give to private and party meetings the authority of a public assembly. Again, it appears to me exceedingly objectionable thus to separate religious sects, and to give the semblance of public authority to religious animosities. I object again to thus calling one part of his Majesty's subjects to petition against another; and still more do I object to their petitioning another country against the liberties of their own. Sir, I beg not to be understood as casting any reflection on the Irish Protestant petitioners; but their object has evidently been, and is neither more nor less than this, to entreat the parliament of this country not to grant civil liberty to the great body of the people of Ireland. They petition us to inflict on their countrymen a sentence of perpetual incapacity. They petition us to announce to Ireland the destination of being for ever a divided colony; to impress on the general sense an acquiescence in the necessity of this being a divided empire. Sitting for a moment, they have given judgment for eternity."

Mr Grattan concluded a certainly eloquent and powerfully pointed oration by moving that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the laws affecting his Majesty's Roman-catholic subjects. On the side of the advocates of the Catholic claims, the most elegant, powerful, and ingenious address, however, was perhaps that of Mr Plunkett, who, with all the subtlety of a practical advocate and a most able logician, demonstrated the palpable inconsistencies of the methods which at different periods of our history had been adopted, first to debar the Catholic from the free exercise of his religion, and next to debar him from political privi-

leges, if after his religion was legalized he adhered to it. Still lawyer-like, however, he made his advocacy of the measure of emancipation entirely conditional, entirely dependent upon the validity of certain supposed securities for the safety of the Protestant Church, a reservation at which, at this distance of time, it is not easy to avoid a smile, knowing as we do how completely, seventeen years afterwards, these notions were ignored by those who now laid the greatest stress upon them.

Of this portion of the speech of Mr Plunkett, Mr Peel, as was only natural, dexterously availed himself. In fact, the admission gave the secretary "the long end of the lever," for what was the use of the House going into committee if the Catholic Association had not, as was the well known fact, any securities to propose? In short, Mr Plunkett's demand of securities was his single "heel of Achilles," which infallibly gave his cunning adversary the opportunity of a tolerably triumphant reply. But if (with this sole exception) Mr Plunkett's address was the most subtle and scholastic, that of Mr Wellesley Pole was the most extraordinary.

This gentleman had been Mr Peel's predecessor in office, and had been left out of Lord Liverpool's ministerial programme in order to make way for the higher talent and more statesman-like character of the younger Peel. Touched to the quick by this slight, and resolved on retaliation, the ex-secretary at once changed sides, and supported those claims which, whilst in office, he had uniformly opposed. His pretexts were a change of opinion

amongst the Protestants in Ireland;—the dissolution of the Catholic committee in obedience to the proclamation which charged it with being an illegal delegation; and the great divisions upon the subject which he said existed in the cabinet. These, however, were felt to be, what they really were, pretexts and not reasons; and Mr Pole's whole speech took with the House, the colour of the assault of a discarded servant upon the master who has dismissed him.

At the conclusion of this somewhat unexpected display, Mr Peel, feeling his advantage, rose; and the speech delivered by him on this occasion, for pointed sarcasm, ingenious retort, dexterous allusion, and ostensible moderation, will bear a comparison with any of his orations in after-times; eminently calculated as some of them were to hit the taste, bias the judgment, and bewilder the faculties of the assembly to which they were addressed. That this address should at once stamp the young Irish secretary as a man of high available talent and consummate address, is not matter for astonishment. He wisely commenced with an onslaught upon his predecessor in office, Mr Wellesley Pole,—rushing without delay or ceremony "in medias res."

"Sir (began Mr Peel), the speech which the right honourable gentleman has just delivered is the most extraordinary one which I ever heard. Sir, I defy the right honourable gentleman to reconcile the opinions which he has just expressed with those which, from his own avowal at a former period, he was supposed to entertain. Sir, the right honourable gentleman is surprised that those who succeeded him in office, and

whom he is pleased to call "his halves," should differ so much from each other on this subject; but, greatly as my right honourable friend (Mr Fitzgerald, now Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, an office before held by Mr Wellesley Pole) and I may differ upon it, we are not more at variance with each other than is the right honourable gentleman with himself. I suspect, indeed, that we are more apt representatives of the right honourable gentleman than he seems to be aware of; and that not only have I succeeded to the right honourable gentleman in one of his official capacities, as my right honourable friend has succeeded him in the other, but the different opinions which the right honourable gentleman has expressed at different periods have been also divided between us; those which the right honourable gentleman held when in office having fallen to my share, and those which he has since espoused to the share of my right honourable friend. In personal unity we certainly cannot represent him, but in discordance of sentiment we are competent to the task.

"Sir, the right honourable gentleman says that we are not to judge of his political opinions by his conduct when in office; that at that time the cabinet was united; that he was in a subordinate capacity, not acting upon his own judgment, but executing the commands of others; he adds, too, that documents would be found if the offices were ransacked which would prove that the opinions which he now expresses could be reconciled with those that he then held. Sir, if this be so,—if the right honourable gentleman did differ from those with whom he was acting, what forbearance has he not shown in this house! He was taunted with arrogating to himself the whole of the government of Ireland; the official acts of that government were imputed by some of his adversaries to his impetuosity and to his indiscretion; yet he submitted with cheerfulness to every imputation of bigotry and intolerance, and not a word escaped him from which it could be inferred that there was not the most cordial concurrence of sentiment

on every branch of the Catholic question between himself and the other members of that government. Sir, I may admire the right honourable gentlemen for their example of forbearance and of discretion, but I cannot help thinking that it would have been better for him, if he did differ from those whose instructions he was to execute, to have resigned his office rather than have sacrificed his opinions.

"Sir, I was desirous, I own, of following the right honourable baronet (Sir John Newport) in the debate; but I yielded precedence to the right honourable gentleman, because on this subject I thought he rose to answer the right honourable baronet. Sir, I find myself mistaken. And with regard to the right honourable gentleman's own speech, I confess my inability to answer it; but I may refer for an answer to a speech of the right honourable gentleman himself!

"Unless I am very much mistaken, there was a speech of the right honourable gentleman's, delivered in the very last session of parliament, in which he stated that he had hitherto declined delivering his opinion upon the Catholic claims as distinct from the conduct of the Catholic committee; but being called upon, he had no difficulty in confessing that he *did not* see the possibility of extending to the Catholics the privileges which their Protestant brethren enjoyed, with safety to the establishment in church and state. To clear himself from any charge of inconsistency even in the mind of those who remember his former declarations, the right honourable gentleman now says, 'that the present circumstances are different from those under which this question has been discussed at former periods.' The right honourable gentleman seems to attribute this change to the measures of the Irish government at the period when he was one of its members; and he says that from those measures (alluding to the proceedings against the Catholic convention) three important consequences have resulted, all of which call for a different line of conduct in the house at the present time towards the Catholics of Ireland.

"In the first place, he says the Catholic committee is dissolved.

"In the second, that the Catholic body has come generally forward, and has unanimously petitioned the legislature for relief from their present disabilities.

"Thirdly, that the Protestants of Ireland have also expressed their sentiments in favour of qualified concessions to the Catholics, and have presented petitions to that effect from most counties in Ireland.

"Sir, I cannot but think that the right honourable gentleman has been rather unfortunate in his deduction of these consequences from the causes to which he attributes them. In the first place, says the right honourable gentleman, the Catholic committee is dissolved. Literally speaking, he is correct; but surely he must know that, though the committee is dissolved, yet every individual who composed it was re-appointed by an aggregate meeting of the Catholic body to act on the part of that body, and that they are now pursuing, in their own new capacity, precisely the same course which they pursued in their old one. The Catholic committee, when a decision in a court of justice had proved its illegality, was undoubtedly changed in its name and in its form of appointment, and it now skulks behind that law which its former constitution violated. But I cannot think, that the right honourable gentleman will persist in arguing that this necessary deference to the sentence of a court of law materially changes the nature of the petition which is prepared under the auspices of the Catholic board.

"The second effect of those measures of the Irish government, in which the honourable gentleman bore a prominent part, and which measures had my warmest approbation, has been, according to the right honourable gentleman, to call forth from the Catholics a general expression of their sentiments and an unanimous application for further privileges. Why, sir, I never heard that at former periods, even preced-

ing the dissolution of the Catholic convention, there was any doubt as to the wish of the Catholics on this subject, or that the expression of these feelings had ever been at all partial or equivocal.

"But the third result is of all the most extraordinary. The Protestants, says the right honourable gentleman, have come forward in different counties, and have presented petitions which it pleases the right honourable gentleman to designate (with the exception of one or two) as favourable to the claims, or at least to the parliamentary discussion of the claims, of the Catholics. Does the right honourable gentleman really consider these petitions to have been presented in consequence of the conduct of the Irish government in dispersing the Catholic committee? Does he mean to argue that this body having been dissolved, the Protestants are satisfied; that all jealousies are allayed, and that the claims of the Catholics may now be acceded to without objection on the part of the Protestants of Ireland? Surely, sir, the right honourable gentleman must recollect that it is now two years since he addressed his circular letter pointing out the illegality of delegation, and expressing the determination of the Irish government to visit any meetings held for that purpose with the penalties of the law. The right honourable gentleman must surely recollect that it is considerably more than a year since the Catholic committee dissolved itself, and the Catholic board was appointed in its room; but that it is only within the last three or four months that the petitions from the Protestants of Ireland, referred to, have been resolved upon in the respective counties;—petitions in which the sentiments of the Protestants are expressed with a moderation that does them the highest credit. But these petitions, which I consider to be decidedly against the concessions which are now demanded by the Catholics, arose—not out of the conduct of the Irish government—not out of the dispersion of the Catholic convention—but have been called forth by the resolution to which

the House of Commons came in the last session of parliament, and by the just apprehensions that the Protestants of Ireland feel for the security of their establishment, were those privileges granted to the Catholics with which alone they now profess themselves to be satisfied. If these be the grounds on which the right honourable gentleman defends himself from the charge of inconsistency, I fear, on examination, he will not find them tenable.

"There is, however, one point on which the right honourable gentleman is right; he is right in supposing my sentiments are directly adverse to the present motion. I should be reluctant to trouble the house with the expression of them, if I did not think with my right honourable friend (Mr Fitzgerald) that, considering the situations in which we stand, a silent vote on a question so materially affecting the interests of that country might be thought unbecoming.

"Sir, I must first express some little surprise at an argument of my right honourable friend, that every gentleman who voted for the resolutions of the right honourable gentleman (Mr Canning) in the last session of parliament, is bound by consistency to vote for the propositions which the right honourable gentleman (Mr Grattan) has now submitted. Sir, I own I should consider myself bound by no such obligation. Had I had the misfortune to have voted with the right honourable gentleman last year, I should have been most anxious to follow the honourable gentleman (Mr Banks), and to declare my determination to oppose the motion of the right honourable gentleman. I cannot see the slightest pretence for imputing inconsistency to such a line of conduct. The pledge which the house gave in the last session of parliament was not simply that it would consider the Catholic claims, but that it would consider them with the view and for the purpose of attaining three distinct objects. There were implied conditions attached to that pledge.

"First, that the adjustment of the Catholic claims should be final and satisfactory.

"Secondly, that the stability of the church establishment should be effectually provided for.

"Thirdly, that the arrangement in all should be one tending to promote concord and satisfaction amongst all classes of his majesty's subjects.

"Now, sir, is it probable that, by the discussion of this question *now*, any one of these objects will be attained? Is it likely that the adjustment will be a final one? If it be an adjustment that satisfies the Catholics, can it be one which will secure your church establishment from danger? But, above all, is there the remotest prospect that any arrangement of a final nature can now be made which the Protestants of the empire can view with satisfaction? To prove that all classes of his majesty's subjects will not be satisfied with any arrangement of which adequate securities for our church establishment shall form part, I shall need only to beg leave to read an extract from some resolutions of one class of his majesty's subjects interested in that arrangement—namely, the Catholics of Ireland. This meeting (a meeting at Kilkenny) resolves 'that this spirit, we fear, will only be the reproduction, or rather continuance, of that system by which England has thought proper to govern this country for a series of centuries,—that is to say, a system of division, founded upon wretched and mistaken notions of policy. That the government will most probably affect liberality, and suffer a majority to vote for a consideration of our claims, and that they will, at the same time, consult their real determination never to grant us our rights by making the *veto* securities and arrangements the *sine qua non* of our emancipation.

"'That therefore, lest the government should be supposed to act without a full and entire knowledge of the opinion and feelings of the Catholics upon that most important subject, and also to put down by anticipation any such effort as that just now

made with equal failure and insidiousness, we feel it our duty thus finally to declare that we consider the question of veto, or arrangement, or securities, to have been set at rest for ever by the declaration of our prelates, and that we should consider the enactment of a law which should give emancipation incorporated with a veto, or with arrangements or securities, as a penal law, —a law of persecution; and such a law as when promulgated in Ireland would be likely, not only to add to the agitation and irritation of men's minds, but to hazard the safety and salvation of the empire.'

"Sir, if I were amongst the wavering friends of the Catholics, I should advise the postponement of this consideration into which we are required to enter, until the present just jealousies and suspicions of the Protestants might be somewhat allayed. I would give time to the Catholics to reflect on their past conduct—on the prejudice their cause has received from the intemperance of some of their advocates; and I would afford them the opportunity of gradually receding from those unjust pretensions which, advanced at first with precipitation, are now insisted upon with a vehemence of which they may yet be wise enough to repent. I would not, sir, now ask the House to come to a decision which, if favourable to the Catholics, will not be likely to promote cordial union between them and their Protestant brethren; but which, if not favourable, must infallibly prejudice future discussions, and must infallibly compel us to consider them as appeals to the same tribunal, after mature consideration, and after an inquiry avowedly entered into for the purpose of a final conciliatory arrangement."

After some severe remarks on the proposed bill of Mr Grattan, and ridicule of its one security, that the throne should, in all cases, be occupied by a Protestant; and after painting the forlorn situation of a Protestant monarch sitting at a council-table surrounded by Catholic advisers, and confronted by a parliament

swayed by a Catholic majority, Mr Peel proceeded to shower insidious compliments upon Mr Plunkett for demanding securities which he knew the Catholics would not give, after the following fashion; which to the honourable and learned gentleman must have appeared very like a shower composed of drops of boiling lead:—

"Sir (proceeded the Irish Secretary), I concur in the admiration which has been so generally expressed of the speech of the right honourable gentleman; but there is one quality for which I most admire it—which is a rare one—I mean for its sincerity. I know, sir, what popularity the right honourable gentleman might have acquired had he pursued a different course. I know the sorry pre-eminence which he might have attained had he consented to advocate the cause of unqualified concession. The deputations and the processions with which he would have been greeted on his return to Dublin;—the addresses he might have received, and the answers he might have returned. He might have shared with the Bishop of Norwich the honours which were paid to that reverend prelate at the orgies of the Black Abbey of Kilkenny, and heard his name associated with such sentiments and toasts as these:—'Lord Wellington! and may the victories of Irishmen cease to secure their own degradation!' and 'Mr Cobbett, and the free press of England!'"

Mr Peel, again applying himself to Mr. Grattan's proposed bill, argued at some length that the reasons given for further concessions without securities, if carried out to their whole legitimate consequences, would prove that even to exclude a Catholic sovereign would be an act of folly, inasmuch as under the Catholic Plantagenets, the English constitution was cherished as much as it ever has been since. He

then went on to contend that to confine the succession to Protestants was useless, if the Protestant monarch was to be surrounded by Catholic functionaries; asking of what use would be an irresponsible Protestant king, with a Catholic chancellor and a Catholic cabinet to appoint our bishops, or a Catholic lord-lieutenant at Dublin to dispose of the church patronage of Ireland? Mr Peel then went on as follows:—

"I know, sir, that the answer to this is, that Catholics are merely eligible to the offices in question; but that the crown may, in the exercise of its own discretion, continue their exclusion from these offices. Sir, I reply, we have no right to throw this invidious task upon the crown; if Catholics ought to be excluded from any office, then let them be so excluded by the laws of the land, and not by the act of an individual, however exalted his station. It will create far less discontent and dissatisfaction amongst the Catholics to continue their present disqualification, than (at the same time you admit them to be qualified) to deny them thus the benefit they expect from it.

"Sir (continued Mr Peel), I am not one of those who think that the removal of the present restrictions upon the Catholics is an object of little concern to them. It is only natural that those who embark in the lottery of life should be desirous to have the chance, at least, of attaining the highest prizes. But let the Catholics recollect that they are not only unwilling to pay the same price for political privileges that is exacted from the other subjects of his majesty, but that they have hitherto refused to submit to the same restrictions that, with their own consent, are imposed upon the Catholics of other countries wherein the government is not Catholic; and this with the pope's consent. When gentlemen refer us to the state of the Catholics of Canada, and to their admission to offices there and in Russia, let them recollect that the cases are not parallel.

That, in Canada, the Protestant sovereign of this country has the appointment of the Catholic bishops of Quebec, and that when the Empress Catherine founded the Catholic Church of Mohilau, the pope, as a matter of course, granted his sanction to the appointment of a bishop nominated by the empress. Let gentlemen recollect, when they charge us with bigotry and with intolerance, that the claims now advanced by the Catholics are claims which unquestionably would have been rejected without hesitation at a time when Catholic princes were upon the throne of these realms, and when Catholics composed its legislature. I am not now inquiring whether those securities which have been required from the Catholics are adequate or not adequate for the purpose proposed; but I contend that, whilst they are neither unprecedented nor unreasonable, and are yet withheld by the Catholics themselves, they have no ground—not the slightest—to complain of the injustice of their own disqualifications.

"Sir, we are told that, because we have granted so much, we cannot with consistency withhold that which we now refuse to concede. That, having given to the Catholics the elective franchise, we have given them substantially political power; and that it is only absurd to allow a Catholic to be represented, and yet not allow him to be a representative. I will not now argue whether the grant of the elective franchise was a wise one or not; but I can see reasons for that concession which in no way apply to the concession of the farther privileges now demanded. We have said to the Catholics, you are possessed of property, and you shall have the franchise which that property confers; you shall not be taxed without your own consent—you shall exert influences in the state; but we insist on this qualification on your representative, that he shall disavow opinions and tenets which we believe to be hostile to the establishments of the country in church and state. And where is the hardship of this—at all events to those represented? Does it weaken the exertions of the friends of

the Catholics because they are bound to abjure the Catholic faith? If we admit Catholics into parliament, shall we find them more eager in the cause than some of their Protestant friends at present are? Will those of Waterford find, in one of their own religious persuasion, an advocate more zealous than the right honourable baronet (Sir John Newport)? Or can the Catholics of Tipperary send to this house a louder champion than the honourable and gallant general (Matthew)? And here, Sir, let me thank that honourable general for the distinguished compliment which he has been pleased to pay the government of which I form a part, when he had the goodness to assure the House that every measure of that government had his unqualified disapprobation!

"Sir, there is only one other point to which I will advert. The right honourable gentleman says, that the Catholics have disclaimed all the dangerous tenets that have been imputed to them; and that the answers of the universities, and the oaths which the Catholics take, must satisfy every reasonable mind that there is no danger to the state in their present opinions. Sir, I own that I require more than the mere disclaimers of such doctrines as these, that the pope has the power of deposing sovereigns, or that faith is not to be kept with heretics. Whilst the supremacy of any earthly prince is admitted within these realms, of whatever nature that supremacy may be, spiritual or temporal, it ought to be defined, without the possibility of error or of misconstruction. We know that, at present, it is not so. Catholic writers themselves have told us, that whilst the spiritual supremacy of the pope, unexplained and unlimited as it is, is admitted, no great security must be expected from restrictions on the exercise of his temporal authority. Surely it behoves the Catholic prelates to meet in synod, and to remove the possibility of misconception on this point. They must be aware there is a great jealousy of the exercise of any foreign authority within these realms; there have been instances in the history of this country in which the

spiritual supremacy of the pope has been called in to countenance proceedings which might justify an apprehension that the limits of spiritual authority were not sufficiently defined. Without wishing to revive the memory of animosities, which no one can more earnestly than I do desire to bury in oblivion, but for the sole purpose of proving the sort of interpretation which Catholic prelates have themselves given of the terms 'spiritual supremacy,' I read an extract from a work, which is a continuation of the history of Hume (Smollett's Continuation, vol. i. c. i. § 41). The author is recording the proceedings of the Catholics in Ireland, before the power of William III. was established in that country, and when we have before us the last instance in which that body have held a paramount political power within the United Kingdom. We are there informed that "when the bishoprics and benefices in the gift of the crown became vacant, the king (James the Second) ordered the profits to be lodged in the exchequer, and suffered the cures to be totally neglected. These revenues were, however, chiefly employed in the maintenance of Romish bishops and priests, who grew so insolent under this indulgence, that in several places they forcibly seized the Protestant churches. When complaint was made of these outrages, the king (James) promised to do justice to the injured, and in some cases actually ordered the churches to be restored. But the popish clergy refused to comply with these orders, alleging, that '*in spirituals*' they owed obedience to no earthly power but the holy see; and James found himself unable to protect his Protestant subjects against a powerful body which he durst not disoblige.

"Now, sir, the right honourable gentleman says we have libelled the faith of the Catholics, and have imputed doctrines to them which they never held; that the Catholics of this day may, indeed, agree in matters of faith with those of a former day, but that they disclaim the construction which we put upon the tenets of those ancestors. I should be sorry to put

the construction upon those tenets which, in the instance I have quoted, appears to have been put upon them by the Catholic prelates themselves; and I refer to that passage as a proof that some explanation of the extent to which the spiritual authority of the pope really goes is absolutely called for.

"Sir, we are told we are not to treat with, but legislate for, Catholics; yet when the right honourable gentleman is asked what securities he will propose, he answers that he has not any to propose, and that to one he will not consent; that is, to the *veto*. But what sort of legislation is this? Why is the *veto* abandoned? Because the Catholics will not consent to it. And if we abandon it on these grounds, upon what principle can we insist on domestic nomination, which we have every reason to believe to be equally objectionable to Catholics? There was a time, sir, when, by Catholic prelates themselves, the *veto* was admitted not to be incompatible with the Catholic religion. That admission they have retracted; but they have not accompanied that retractation with any admission that domestic nomination is more consistent with it. If, then, you think securities absolutely necessary; and if these prelates have recently issued a formal declaration that, in the present state of their church, no alteration, at this time, can take place in the mode of their appointment, I should think that every person—save those who wish to see all privileges granted to Catholics without any restriction whatever—must see the utter impossibility of coming to any final or conciliatory adjustment of Catholic claims at the present moment, and oppose the motion of the right honourable gentleman."

Mr Peel's cautious but powerful opposition to Mr Grattan's motion was so far fruitless that the House resolved, by a majority of forty, to go into committee; but of those who voted for this step, many probably only so voted because they knew that the step must be fruitless. In fact, between the position of the Irish

secretary and that of Mr Plunkett and the majority of those who insisted upon going into a committee, the difference was merely nominal, and one of form rather than of substance. Mr Plunkett chose to go into committee, although when in committee he was resolved to insist upon supposed securities, which, as he well knew, the Catholics were now as resolved to refuse. Mr Peel declined to go into committee, because he knew that if securities were refused the friends of the Catholics must be in a minority, and that the only end of such a step would be the repetition of a refusal which had been already given. The fact was, that the more penetrating politicians had now begun to suspect that the Regent was at heart as much opposed to the emancipation of the Catholics as ever his father had been; and this damped the ardour of many, who were willing enough to follow Mr Grattan whilst they believed the beams of court-favour helped to illuminate the path. For such "wavering friends," as they were aptly and sarcastically denominated by Peel, the demand of securities, which were sure to be refused, afforded a safe and nicely sheltered retreat; and hence, though the vote of the House seemed to ordinary eyes to be favourable to the cause of the Catholics, it was in truth the reverse, and sixteen years of events, some of them too extraordinary to be anticipated, were required before a state of affairs could be brought about which only gave them a triumph, because that triumph could not be longer delayed.

The speech of the Irish Secretary himself, putting aside its great talent both logical and sarcastic, is curious in the extreme, as being the earliest exhi-

bition of the rare and peculiar character of his mind. In the apprehension of men, Mr Peel was, at this period, a high tory and orange-man after Lord Eldon's own heart. Perhaps in his own apprehension he was so. That he, then and long after that, deemed it, in the abstract, advisable to deprive the Catholics, especially the Irish Catholics, of power for as long a period as possible, cannot be doubted. But it is impossible to contemplate narrowly the address delivered by him on this occasion, without suspecting that, even at this early period, he had obtained intuitive glimpses of the remote possibility of a time when the privileges, now asked in vain, could be no longer withheld. An analysis of the speech of 1813 clearly shows that the objections to Mr Grattan's motion, then assigned, are all without exception in their own nature conditional, temporary, and dependent on circumstances in themselves changeable and liable to every conceivable kind of modification. He nowhere takes the broad ground taken by some of the more uncompromising of its opponents, that the religion of papists is, in its own nature, a thing not to be treated with by those who defy its power; and that the pretended tolerance of religionists who still hold that no religion is tolerable in the sight of God except their own, is no more to be trusted now than in the days of John Huss. This broad ground Mr Peel, without denying it, ignores, and founds his opposition upon a counter-demand for certain shadowy securities, explanations, and definitions, the possible efficiency of which, either for good or evil, no one ever attempted to demonstrate. Thus the ground taken by Mr Plunkett on one side, and by

Mr Peel on the other, was the same in reality; the only distinction betwixt the two being, that the first asked for securities because he knew they would not be given, whilst the other declined to ask for them for the same reason. Of the bill itself, which gave occasion for these protracted debates, the fate was that which most men foresaw. A clause, fatal to it, was carried in the committee, and the measure was accordingly dropped.

On the debate, in May 1815, on the motion of Sir Henry Parnell, to whom, in preference to their old and eloquent advocate, Mr Grattan, the Catholic body had suffered themselves to be induced to intrust the management of their cause, Mr Peel's line of tactics was substantially the same. In addition to the general denial by the Catholics of the admissibility of anything that could be called "security," he expatiated upon the mode in which they had treated that famous document generally known as "the Rescript of Quarantotti," which was neither more nor less than a circuitous and indirect recommendation from the Vatican to the Irish prelates to admit the principle of "the *veto*," as not incompatible with the discipline and usages of the Catholic church; and with still more galling stress, upon the intemperate and unreined language of some of the Catholic advocates, more especially of Mr O'Connell, of whose speeches he treated the House to more than one extract. This was a very scientific thrust on the part of the Irish Secretary. It was notorious that to the influence of O'Connell, who deeply resented Mr Grattan's silent but significant rebuke of his want of temper when that gentleman con-

tented himself with merely presenting the Catholic petition in 1814, was to be ascribed the transference to Sir Henry Parnell of the advocacy of their claims. To this portion of the speech of the Irish Secretary, on the occasion of the debate of 1815, was by many attributed the defeat, and by a heavy majority, of Sir Henry Parnell; and upon the head of Mr O'Connell some portion of the mortification of the Irish Catholic population was likely to fall. That this position of affairs should sting into anger the natural impetuosity of Mr O'Connell, was a result to be expected.

Mr Peel had dwelt upon the rancour of his apparent feelings, not only towards Protestants who opposed his claims, but towards Protestantism itself; and had quoted his allusion to the cheer which greeted the loss of what he called "the absurd and mischievous bill of 1813," and which he described as worthy of "the abhorrence of all Irishmen." Alluding to the cheering of 1813, Mr O'Connell had exclaimed:—"That ruffian shout of English insolence may be the last outrage on poor, fallen, degraded Ireland. The day-star of her liberty will arise. But this last insult is indelibly fixed in the mind of every Irish Catholic; and, though it may be forgiven, it cannot be forgotten!" Such language, argued Mr Peel, said little for the possibility of any conciliatory arrangement; and he asked whether any candid man could calculate, after such proceedings, that any bill which the house was likely to adopt could give satisfaction to or excite the gratitude of the Catholics of Ireland? The Whigs, including even Mr Grattan, generally took the same tone as Mr Peel, deprecating the more recent conduct of the

Catholic Association, and regarding the principle of "securities" as finally adopted by the legislature. In fact, the house seemed glad of the opportunity to reverse the apparent faltering of 1813, and Sir Henry Parnell's proposal was negatived by a majority of 80; most of those whom Mr Peel had in 1813 described as "the wavering friends" of Catholic emancipation, voting against it. In truth, the indisposition of the Regent towards any further concessions had become pretty generally suspected by those who looked to the court before they voted; and hence the altered appearance of the division-list of 1815.

This "passage of arms," in its ultimate consequences, was destined to give rise to one of the most questionable acts of the public life of Peel. Mr O'Connell had, from the beginning of his public career, taken the character of the Irish secretary from the impressions of the Irish Orange party, rather than from any calm consideration of the acts and language of the man himself. He had always affected to treat him as the sworn and inveterate enemy of all who professed the Catholic creed, and as one from whom nothing but oppression was to be expected. This dislike of Peel as a statesman, the events and result of the debate on Sir Henry Parnell's motion of May 1815 apparently stung into a kind of madness. Writhing under this vindictive feeling, Mr O'Connell took occasion, at a meeting in support of the Catholic cause, to throw out the following deliberate insult, for such is undoubtedly its proper designation: "I said at the last meeting," exclaimed the envenomed orator, "in the presence of the note-takers

of the police, who are paid by him, that he was too prudent to attack me in my presence. I see the same police-informers here now, and I authorize them carefully to report my words, that Mister Peel would not *dare* in my presence, nor in any place where he was liable to personal account, to use a single expression derogatory of my interest or my honour!"

In Ireland, in the year of our Lord 1815, very little indeed was quite sufficient to induce a gentleman to believe that he was called upon by the stern laws of honour to hazard his life in a duel. Without, however, entering upon the *vexata questio* of duelling generally, it seems difficult at this distance of time even to conceive how a public man, in the position of the Secretary for Ireland, could bring himself to deem it necessary to hazard his existence in order to repel expressions manifestly levelled at him in his official capacity, and from the vindictive feelings of a baffled though probably a sincere partisan. Mr O'Connell himself, after no lengthened period, discovered the excessive folly of supposing that any man, whose public exertions might make him conspicuous, should be bound to render himself a mark for the first bully who might speculate upon obtaining the patronage of a party by shooting an opponent. Such notions, however, at that moment, found no favour in Ireland; and Mr Peel, as soon as he was aware of the expressions of Mr O'Connell with reference to himself, felt himself called upon to notice them. Sir Charles Saxton was his emissary on this occasion, whilst Mr Lidwill was the friend of Mr O'Connell; and these two gentlemen, either soli-

citous to avoid all risk of bloodshed, or else getting into a sort of bewilderment very unusual in that country in these cases, could not agree upon the knotty point of who was to send the challenge. Sir Charles Saxton, on the part of his principal, waved the privilege of parliament, and professed his client's readiness to be answerable, if called upon, for anything uttered in the House of Commons, either during the debate of May 1815 or at any other time. Mr Lidwill, on the other hand, on behalf of his principal, held, that if Mr Peel felt aggrieved by any of O'Connell's expressions, he ought, in the ordinary routine of such matters, to seek satisfaction. From these strong positions neither party was inclined to stir; and where neither side will take the initiative, a duel is impossible. The seconds accordingly, finding it hopeless to reduce the quarrel to a practical shape, seem to have resolved to have another on their own account, and, as the readiest way, contradicted in the newspapers each other's versions of the negotiation.

This course soon resulted in a challenge, and the two seconds agreed to meet at Calais as principals in this new quarrel. Mr O'Connell not liking his position, again acted for himself; and employing the press as his medium, represented the affair as an evasion on the part of Mr Peel and Sir Charles Saxton. This brought the matter to a crisis. Mr Peel, feeling his situation now entirely untenable, sought a new agent in the person of Colonel Brown, and challenged Mr O'Connell. The affair, however, had now become too public to be allowed by the legal functionaries to pro-

ceed, and Mr O'Connell was arrested and bound over to keep the peace. In this predicament, a duel abroad was the only alternative; but even this last resort was destined to fail the two belligerents. O'Connell was again arrested when on his road to the Continent, in London, and bound over in heavy penalties not to quit the kingdom. In the meantime, Sir Charles Saxton and Mr Lidwill met at Calais, when Mr Lidwill, declining to return the fire of Sir Charles, the affair ended harmlessly, Mr Peel in vain endeavouring to establish a right to fight Mr Lidwill in the absence of his principal Mr O'Connell—a proposition very properly resisted by all the parties appealed to.

Out of this ill-judged and absurd affair arose a torrent of ridicule, to which Mr Peel was obliged to submit, and from which his adversary by no means escaped; and it is probable, that out of these irritating circumstances arose that violent personal hatred between the parties, which O'Connell, to do him justice, never affected to conceal, and which, on the part of his opponent, could not always be concealed. The sensation caused by a private quarrel could not, however, last amidst the extraordinary events which now fully occupied the minds of all men, and in which, though the Irish Secretary appeared to take no immediate or prominent part, he ultimately became, by a combination of circumstances of which he probably was not by any means fully aware, completely mixed up. In order to understand these circumstances, we must, however, step back to the changeful year of 1814.

CHAPTER IV.

Reverses of France in 1814—The Economists' Influence with Mr Peel—Conduct of the British Press as to France—Financial Position of 1814—Depreciation of the Current Money—Its True Extent—Prices of Grain and Merchandise—Napoleon at Elba—Returns to France in March 1815—Promptitude of the Ministry—Sudden Peace with United States—Victory of Waterloo—Peace of 1815—Fall of Prices—Corn Law Agitation—Mr Western—Mr Huskisson—Dangerous Power of the Economists—Mr Peel joins them—Strange Position of Ministers—Mistakes of the Economists—Mr Western heads the Country Party—His Tactics—Agricultural Report—Corn Law of 1815—Mr Peel's Irish Policy—Education—Sir Robert Peel's Factory Bill—Mr Peel resigns his Post.

It has been already stated that, although the younger Peel, on his entrance into the House of Commons, took no ostensible part in the discussions originated by the party of Economists, of which Mr Horner was then the chief; and although, in obedience probably to the parental influence, he voted for those resolutions as to the value of the currency, which provoked the especial ridicule of that party, yet it cannot be doubted that, inheriting as he did a predilection for this species of inquiry, the report of the Bullion Committee, and the evidence on which that report was founded, made a deep impression upon his mind. This predilection the times which were now approaching were eminently calculated to excite.

As soon as it had become manifest, in the summer of the eventful year of 1814, that the destruction of the power of Napoleon was at hand, and that a lasting peace, the effect of the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, might now be calculated upon as certain, there appeared, as exhibited by the press of England, a deep and half-concealed half-expressed fear lest France should be left, after all her military reverses, too strong and too prosperous in an economical and commercial sense. Nor was this uneasiness by any means unfounded, nor that of shallow or unreflecting minds. In that country a political counter-revolution had indeed been effected, but it was only political. Economically, fiscally, and commercially, the counter-revolution was incomplete. France was indeed about to be reduced to her ancient boundaries. Her frontier was now receding from the Rhine. Italy was again about to be subdivided into petty kingdoms and provinces or principalities. And Belgium, by an act of power as unjustifiable as that which made it a part of France, was now about to be annexed to Holland, with whose inhabitants the Belgians had much less sympathy than with the French, and whose financial burdens they were naturally most unwilling to bear. The military strength of France was thus diminished, but the economic and commercial benefits which the catastrophe of the revolution had not prevented were still left her; and, as a trading rival, she was yet formidable, though beaten as a military conqueror of the nations of Europe. Anterior to the convulsion of 1789, the soil of France

was nearly altogether in the hands of what were called the privileged orders—that is to say, in the possession of the nobles, the higher clergy, and the conventual establishments, upon whom devolved such care as was taken of the poor, who were held to have a lien upon the property of the church, which originally, all over Europe, was given in trust for charitable uses. Possessed of all this property, the privileged orders were at the same time in a great measure exempt from taxation, the weight of which fell principally upon the bourgeoisie or trading classes. The crushing weight of this unequal taxation at last caused that revolt against the old monarchy which revolutionized France. In a vain attempt to preserve the French fund-holders, the property of the nobles, the church, and the poor, was swept away—the debt at last sharing the common fate. Thus the entire social state of France was changed, in some things for the better, in others for the worse; but this new order of things the restored Bourbons could not dare to alter.

France had now three millions of land-owners, who really formed the strength of the country. Napoleon had restored the Catholic religion, and tried to create a nobility; but, being destitute of wealth, neither had much political influence. During the empire, however, the commercial position of France had greatly improved. Napoleon, whose talents as a financier were almost on a par with his wonderful ability as a general, had created a fiscal system for France which it would have been well for his suc-

cessors to have imitated. France under Napoleon was free from debt, her taxes were moderate, and mostly direct, and the taxes of the year always paid the expenses of the year. The public improvements under the empire were enormous. Roads were made, canals dug, ports created, bridges built, and inland intercommunications everywhere improved; and France, unindebted, untithed, and moderately taxed, was in a position in 1814 to start as the commercial rival of England, certainly with great advantages for such a conflict. Had it been the policy of the Bourbons to have made a legal provision for the few poor at that time in France, and could they have retained intact the fiscal system of Napoleon in its great features, they might probably have been at this hour in possession of their restored dominions. In 1814, however, France was as the emperor had left it, in a highly improved economical state, and socially strong, though politically prostrate; and this the prompters and conductors of the periodical press in England seem early to have perceived. Even before the closing conflict on the height of Montmartre in 1814, the allies were warned by the British press not to leave France too strong; and a general peace being now certain, comparisons began to be made between the relative means of the two countries for enjoying and improving such a state.

These comparisons were really and still more apparently to the disadvantage of England. We had, indeed, triumphed at the end of a long, bloody, and expensive war; but that war, like several that preceded

it, had been carried on by means that cause the worst evils of the state of warfare to survive the war. It was also carried on by means of an instrument that, like the Indian hunting-tiger, is apt before the whole is over to turn upon those who employ it. In short, the twenty-two years of a war, now drawing to its end, had been for the most part waged by means of loans; and these loans had only been borrowed and lent by means of a paper circulation, of which the issues were of necessity perpetually augmenting; whilst the whole currency, thus gradually swelled more and more in quantity relatively to the currencies of other countries, was, by the same necessity, as constantly depreciating in exchangeable value.* The exact amounts of the

* The following account, extracted from the Report of the Committee of Secrecy on the Bank Charter in 1832, demonstrates the annual additions to the circulation of the Bank of England. The totals are as they stood on the 28th or 29th of February in each year:—

Years.	Circulation.	Years.	Circulation.
1792,	... £11,307,380	1804,	... £17,077,830
1793,	... 11,888,910	1805,	... 17,871,170
1794,	... 10,744,020	1806,	... 17,730,120
1795,	... 14,017,510	1807,	... 16,950,680
1796,	... 10,729,520	1808,	... 18,188,860
1797,	... 9,674,780	1809,	... 18,542,860
1798,	... 13,095,830	1810,	... 21,019,600
1799,	... 12,959,800	1811,	... 23,360,220
1800,	... 16,344,470	1812,	... 23,408,320
1801,	... 16,213,280	1813,	... 23,210,930
1802,	... 15,186,880	1814,	... 24,801,080
1803,	... 15,319,930	1815,	... 27,261,650

In 1793, when war was declared against France, no approximation to a record of the amount of notes circulated by country banks was in existence; nor are the numbers of these banks exactly known,

additions to the paper circulation of the kingdom at different periods cannot be exactly shown, because the amounts circulated by the country bankers have never been recorded, and can only be estimated by the

but it is believed they did not, at this period, exceed *two hundred* in number. They then, without doubt (unless perhaps at Manchester), all circulated their own promissory notes on demand, sometimes for sums as low as one pound. The following shows the increase of these establishments :—

An Account of Licenses granted in each year to Country Bankers (from 1808 to 1832).

Years.		Years.	Licenses.
11th October 1808	to 11th October	1809,	702
... 1809	...	1810,	782
... 1810	...	1811,	779
... 1811	...	1812,	825
... 1812	...	1813,	922
... 1813	...	1814,	940
... 1814	...	1815,	916
... 1815	...	1816,	831
... 1816	...	1817,	752
... 1817	...	1818,	765
... 1818	...	1819,	787
... 1819	...	1820,	769
... 1820	...	1821,	781
... 1821	...	1822,	776
... 1822	...	1823,	779
... 1823	...	1824,	788
... 1824	...	1825,	797
... 1825	...	1826,	809
... 1826	...	1827,	668
... 1827	...	1828,	672
... 1828	...	1829,	677
... 1829	...	1830,	671
... 1830	...	1831,	641
... 1831	...	1832,	636

effect produced upon prices.* Estimated by the prices of grain alone—which is probably the nearest approximation to actual truth, in so far as the quantities of

* The following document, one of the most valuable ever compiled, and which accurately exhibits the effect on prices produced by the gradually depreciating circulation, was given in, by John Taylor, Esq., to the Commons Committee on Commercial Distress, in 1848, and is copied from their report.

Comparative Prices of Ninety Articles of Commerce in Centesimal Proportions.

*** In every case the price is given without the duty (if any). The price attached to each article at the commencement is taken as the standard equal to 100.

	£ s. d.	1784 to 1790	1791 to 1797	1798 to 1804	1805 to 1811	1812 to 1818	1819 to 1825	1826 to 1832	1833 to 1837
Alum, British, per ton	18 14 3	100	99	131	128	138	98	76	63
Ashes, Pot, Canadian, per cwt.	1 11 8	100	125	141	187	200	125	106	100
Pearl do.	1 16 1	100	111	144	183	197	119	97	100
Bark, Oak, British, per load	11 6 0	100	100	177	296	265	186	193	167
Brandy, Cognac, per gallon,	0 3 2½	100	252	247	210	405	118	97	105
Candles, per dozen lb.	0 7 8½	100	111	133	152	152	104	85	—
Cinnamon, per lb.	0 14 2	100	78	41	53	81	58	58	64
Coals, Newcastle, per chaldron	0 19 11	100	130	167	202	190	156	139	124
Sunderland, per chaldron	1 9 0	—	—	100	110	113	108	100	89
Cochineal, per lb.	0 15 6	100	99	156	200	229	154	86	50
Coffee, Jamaica, best, per cwt.	4 7 6	100	118	158	151	124	153	106	128
lowest, per cwt.	3 19 5	100	106	146	123	88	124	59	88
Mocha	9 14 1	100	82	101	140	80	98	61	60
Copper Cakes, British, per cwt.	4 2 5	100	126	168	207	159	119	115	118
Sheets, British, per lb.	0 0 10½	100	116	153	183	158	120	106	106
Corn, Wheat, per bushel	0 5 8½	100	121	165	189	193	130	130	103
Barley, per quarter	1 4 2	100	128	165	177	191	134	186	121
Rye, per quarter	1 9 6	100	127	168	179	184	122	120	109
Oats, per quarter	0 17 2	100	118	157	170	181	131	135	122
Cotton, Wool, Berbice, per lb.	0 2 2½	100	100	116	92	90	53	35	42
Surat, per lb.	0 1 2⅝	—	100	120	119	105	57	37	49
Brazil, per lb.	0 2 0⅝	100	92	121	93	92	50	30	43
Smyrna, per lb.	0 1 2½	100	96	136	126	131	68	59	57
Cotton Yarn, Turkey, per lb.	0 2 7⅝	100	115	156	179	150	117	73	63
British, per lb.	0 2 8	—	—	—	—	100	56	37	37
Currants, per cwt.	1 7 1	100	163	184	195	219	236	145	150
Figs, per cwt.	1 10 10	100	176	279	250	275	133	131	172
Flax, Petersburg, 12 hd., per ton	44 11 5	100	97	152	199	179	121	91	—
Flour, British, per sack	1 17 3	100	123	183	214	223	155	162	137
Hemp, Riga, Rhine, per ton	31 8 1	100	97	167	228	180	117	127	95
Hops, Pockets, per cwt.	6 13 2	100	99	151	98	234	136	154	124
Indigo, Spanish Floras, per lb.	0 11 0	100	97	106	110	106	97	88	55
Iron, Pig, British, per ton	5 18 6	100	130	144	151	151	148	115	96
Lead, Pigs, British, per ton	19 9 3	100	101	133	186	134	123	94	93
Iron Bars, British	16 5 0	100	111	117	106	88	73	53	49
Leather Butts, best, per lb.	0 1 0	100	133	177	204	202	177	179	166
Malt, per bushel	0 3 0⅜	100	138	180	186	225	170	177	150
Nutmegs, per lb.	1 2 9	100	153	84	105	48	19	16	28

grain produced in a country and consumed by its people cannot vary much on an average of years—the depreciation of the currency, towards and at the end

Comparative Prices, &c.—*continued.*

	£	s.	d.	1784 to 1790	1791 to 1797	1798 to 1804	1805 to 1811	1812 to 1818	1819 to 1825	1826 to 1832	1833 to 1837
Oils, Gallipoli, per tun	42	19	3	100	116	149	158	188	119	75	90
Rape, per tun	33	10	0	100	119	149	150	174	123	96	102
Linseed, per tun	36	8	6	100	97	129	157	155	86	60	97
Whale, British Fishery, 252 gallons	20	17	1	100	132	160	153	209	119	135	126
Sperm, best, 252 gallons	51	10	0	100	115	160	174	163	116	118	112
Oil of Vitriol, per lb.	0	0	3¾	100	106	126	113	100	73	40	40
Opium, Turkey, per lb.	0	9	1	100	169	160	396	194	236	167	174
Pepper, Black, per lb.	0	1	2½	100	103	94	63	70	47	31	29
Pimento, per lb.	0	1	0½	100	64	58	100	90	74	64	36
Provisions—Beef, per tierce	3	13	10	100	134	185	195	188	151	142	152
Pork, per barrel	2	19	7	100	124	179	168	176	133	121	111
Waterford Butter, per cwt.	2	18	6	100	120	142	174	197	159	140	145
Quicksilver, per lb.	0	3	3	100	108	85	87	104	57	57	89
Raisins, Malaga, per cwt.	0	18	0	100	163	227	239	262	133	98	88
Red Smyrna, per cwt.	1	3	7	100	138	190	246	250	155	101	94
Rice, Carolina, per cwt.	0	18	8	100	113	176	213	275	135	123	101
Rum, Jamaica, per gallon	0	3	1	100	183	204	179	185	106	103	100
Leeward Isles, per gallon	0	2	5	100	172	196	175	175	81	82	81
Seeds, Caraway, Foreign, per cwt.	0	18	10	100	114	205	276	336	194	97	156
Clover, Red, Foreign, per cwt.	3	6	8	100	97	131	135	123	104	76	72
Clover, White, Foreign, per cwt.	3	16	1	100	112	135	125	136	100	71	65
Rape, British, per last	26	5	8	100	121	144	159	188	127	105	110
Linseed, Foreign, per quarter	2	7	0	100	106	118	168	173	107	86	107
Silk, Raw, Bengal, per lb.	1	6	5	100	104	78	106	111	90	80	76
Brutia, per lb.	1	4	2	100	109	92	103	104	75	52	62
Thrown, Piedmont, per lb.	1	9	11	100	105	118	153	177	125	98	105
Spirits, British, Malt, per gallon	0	2	8½	100	166	193	233	230	193	112	82
Sugar, Jamaica, Brown, per cwt.	1	9	8	100	158	150	139	181	107	93	104
Fine, per cwt.	1	19	0	100	174	167	150	182	125	107	101
Refined Powder Loaf, per cwt.	4	10	1	100	134	134	136	155	113	98	83
Lump, per cwt.	3	14	1	100	153	150	154	172	122	105	92
Tallow, London, Melted, per cwt.	2	8	2	100	113	143	164	169	112	98	102
Russia, Y. C.	2	4	9	100	116	140	166	170	101	81	89
Tar, Archangel, per barrel	0	14	7	100	121	162	257	186	118	93	90
Stockholm, per barrel	0	16	7	100	116	160	249	179	112	89	78
Tea, Bohea, per lb.	0	1	9½	100	101	111	111	143	133	104	116
Congou, per lb.	0	4	11½	100	88	72	73	75	73	67	61
Hyson, per lb.	0	9	2½	100	93	72	61	69	64	61	60
Timber, Riga Fir, per load	1	17	5	100	153	221	402	367	172	151	153
American Pine	2	0	0	100	145	232	459	430	246	201	210
Tin-Blocks, British, per cwt.	4	0	4	100	117	131	159	160	108	96	101
Tobacco, Virginia Twist, per lb.	0	0	5½	100	109	170	204	352	161	104	109
Maryland Pure Yellow	0	0	7¼	100	106	158	172	248	313	268	200
Wax, Bees', British, per cwt.	8	18	3	100	111	118	176	155	158	115	100
Foreign, per cwt.	7	7	9	100	106	110	165	145	151	112	110
Wines, Port, pipe, 138 gallons	22	7	4	100	147	171	228	274	228	221	231
Sherry, butt, 130 gallons	28	4	1	100	128	163	182	224	197	250	269
Woods, Log, Campeachy, per ton	10	12	10	100	115	234	203	154	90	78	—
Mahogany, Jamaica, per foot	0	1	4¼	100	93	130	133	116	95	112	—
Wool, Spanish Leonesa, per lb.	0	3	9½	100	110	140	234	211	123	84	56
South Down	0	0	10½	100	128	180	238	221	150	92	166
Long, Kent	0	0	8¼	100	118	151	175	215	163	127	224
Average of 90 Articles				100	120	150	174	177	125	104	104
Wheat, on General Average, per quarter				45/9	55/6	75/6	86/6	88/4	59/5	59/5	47/2
On the Average of the 90 Articles				45/9	55/0	68,9	80/0	81/0	57/3	47/8	47/8

NOTE.—In all the parliamentary and other returns of the average prices of wheat, 51s. 10d. per Winchester quarter is erroneously set down as the price of 1785, whereas it ought to be 41s. 10d. The correct price is given in the Annual Register.

of the war, must have been very great indeed.* Nor is this general result contravened by the returns of prices of miscellaneous articles, if allowance be made for the necessary effect upon some markets of a state of hostilities, and for the necessary effect upon others of the excessive importations which the continued rise of prices, in all markets with hardly an exception, was calculated to produce. The real cause of this enor-

* If, from the elaborate returns compiled by Mr Tooke, which are probably the most accurate, the average of wheat, for the period beginning with 1784 and ending with 1793, be computed, it will stand nearly thus:—

Years.					Years.				
1784,	...	£1	19	0	1789,	...	£2	8	0
1785,	...	1	15	0	1790,	...	2	6	0
1786,	...	1	14	0	1791,	...	2	0	0
1787,	...	2	0	0	1792,	...	2	2	0
1788,	...	2	3	0	1793,	...	2	10	0
		£9	11	0			£11	6	0
							9	11	0
							10) 20	17	0
							£2	1	8¼

In short, it seems manifest that, for the ten years here specified, the average price at Mark Lane was really not more than 41s. 8d. per quarter Winchester measure. But as the prices at Mark Lane always range some few shillings beyond the average of the country at large, it may be pretty safely assumed that, in the country, during the period between the American and French wars, the average price of wheat could not be more than 36s. or 37s. per Winchester quarter. If with this we compare the prices of grain which obtained after the declaration of war against France in 1793, and more especially after the bank restriction and issue of notes for sums below five pounds in 1797, we shall find ample evidence of the extent of this depreciation.

mous enhancement of the prices of all the necessaries of life was not, at this period, in the least understood; save by a very few persons. The facts, however, were patent enough; and as the cessation of hostilities became certain, an instinctive feeling of some great approaching change in the economical position of this country, relatively to that of other countries, began

An Account of the Average Prices of all sorts of Grain, from 1792 *to* 1815, *inclusive, as laid before Parliament.*

Year.	Wheat.		Rye.		Barley.		Oats.		Beans.		Pease.	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
1792	42	11	30	8	26	9	17	7	31	6	32	8
3	48	11	35	11	31	9	21	3	37	8	38	4
4	51	8	37	9	32	10	22	0	42	6	46	8
5	74	2	48	5	37	8	24	9	46	8	53	4
6	77	1	47	0	35	7	21	9	38	10	43	6
7	53	1	31	11	27	9	16	9	27	6	33	5
8	50	3	30	11	29	1	19	10	30	1	33	11
9	67	6	43	9	36	0	27	7	44	7	45	2
1800	113	7	76	11	60	0	39	10	69	3	67	5
1	118	3	79	9	67	9	36	6	62	8	67	8
2	67	5	43	3	33	1	20	7	36	4	39	6
3	56	6	36	11	24	10	21	3	34	8	38	6
4	60	1	37	1	30	4	23	9	38	7	40	10
5	87	10	54	4	44	8	28	0	47	5	48	4
6	79	0	47	4	38	6	25	8	43	9	43	6
7	73	3	47	6	38	4	28	1	47	3	55	11
8	79	0	52	4	42	1	33	8	60	8	66	7
9	95	7	60	9	47	3	32	8	60	9	60	2
1810	106	2	59	0	47	11	29	4	53	7	55	9
11	94	6	49	11	41	10	27	11	47	10	51	6
12	125	5	75	11	66	6	44	0	72	8	73	7
13	108	9	70	7	58	4	39	5	76	5	78	6
14	73	11	44	6	37	4	26	6	46	7	50	0
1815	64	4	37	10	30	3	23	10	36	1	38	10

An analysis of the foregoing table, which is probably a very near approximation to the truth, exhibits some results which, on a first view, may to some appear startling. The six years from 1792 to

to spread over society, and to show itself through the press.

Amongst the agricultural part of the community, best known as the "landed interest," it became first apparent, probably, and certainly very naturally, because the case of the owners of land was most striking, and, at the same time, most easily understood. The bulk of men then living could not but remember that, only twenty-four years before that time, wheat was sold currently throughout the country at from 4s. 6d. to 5s. the Winchester bushel, and the finest flour at from 1s. 6d. to 2s. the stone of 14 lbs. avoirdupois. This was during the nine years of peace which intervened betwixt the first American and the last French war. In 1814, for the bushel of wheat to bring 11s. or 12s., and the stone of flour 5s. or 6s., was not

1797, inclusive, give an average price for wheat of 57s. 7½d. The nine years from 1798 to 1806, inclusive, produce an average for wheat of 77s. 9¾d.; and the nine years, from 1807 to 1815, inclusive, exhibit an average price of 91s. 2¼d. per quarter, Winchester measure.

If we take wheat as the standard of value of the paper pound, it therefore follows, that during the first period, the paper pound was depreciated down to the value of *fourteen shillings and fourpence three farthings;* during the second period, to *ten shillings and sevenpence;* and, during the third period, to *nine shillings.* These results may startle on a first view; but if we consider what the fall of prices has been since the paper pound was strung up to the mint standard, and made convertible into gold, of which an ounce troy is coined into £3, 17s. 10½d. (the smaller notes under five pounds being withdrawn), that feeling of incredulity gradually disappears. Prior to 1829, when the last small notes were extinguished, the reduction of prices was great. Since that time, it has been extraordinary.

deemed anything very extraordinary, the average price of wheat for the last nine years of the war having been 91s. per quarter. Up to the end of the war, the corn-law of 1804 was in operation—a law which, at the period of its enactment, seemed sufficiently stringent. Until wheat rose above 63s. per quarter, it imposed a prohibitory duty of 24s. 3d. per quarter. From 63s., until wheat rose to 66s. per quarter, it was admitted at 2s. 6d. per quarter duty; and after the price of 66s., at a nominal duty of 6d. per quarter. Under the circumstances of the war, this law had been efficient in preventing any material imports of grain into Great Britain, excepting in the year 1812, which was a year of severe scarcity. As soon, however, as events foreshadowed the liberation of Europe from the domination of the Emperor Napoleon, the landed interest, alarmed at the comparatively low prices of continental grain, began to consider the provisions even of this law as insufficient, and to institute inquiries into the subject. As early as 1813, parliamentary investigations had been commenced. A report of a committee of the Commons, agreed to in the May of that year, advises a great addition to the price at which importation should be allowed; and in 1814 a committee, appointed to inquire into the state of agriculture, collected and laid before the House of Lords a body of evidence of the most important nature.

But before entering upon this engrossing topic, and the proceedings of the two Houses relative to this vital matter—proceedings with which Mr Peel really became more closely connected than he is generally held

to have been—it becomes necessary to glance, however briefly, at an event which may, with perfect justice, be designated one of the most extraordinary that has occurred in modern times, when all the circumstances attending it are calmly viewed and considered.

In the course of the summer of the memorable year 1814, the allied Austrian, Russian, Prussian, and British armies, having early in the spring invaded the French territory, at length occupied Paris, and by a convention entered into at Fontainebleau, banished the Emperor Napoleon to the little island of Elba, for the remainder (as then it was thought) of his extraordinary life. As soon as the unexpected events of this strange period began rapidly to succeed each other, a revulsion of feeling, as has been already stated, appeared to take place in England. To a well-grounded alarm, as to the power of England to continue a conflict with France, as France then was, succeeded fears as to a successful competition with her and the other nations recently her vassals in the new position which they were now likely to hold. This alarm, it has been seen, arose out of the comparatively low prices of continental produce, and more especially of grain, and out of the commercial influence which, it was apprehended, France might acquire, amongst others, in consequence of this cheapness; and hence it was that, even before the actual catastrophe of 1814, both Houses of Parliament began to occupy themselves with inquiries into agricultural and other statistics, in which they were busily employed at the period of the convention of Fontainebleau. These discussions

were actively continued through the early months of the succeeding year 1815, when they were suddenly, though only temporarily, arrested by an event as extraordinary as it was unlooked for by men in general, who deemed Napoleon's career finally finished, and never doubted that such must necessarily be the case.

On the 9th of March 1815, it was announced by the *Courier* newspaper, then a principal organ of government, that the Emperor Napoleon had landed in the Bay of Juan, near Antibes, in France, attended by General Cambronne and a few other officers, and a small but well armed retinue. That the public was taken by surprise when this extraordinary event was made known, cannot be doubted. The circumstances of the escape were not less marvellous than the enterprise. An English officer was stationed at Porto Ferrajo for the purpose of watching the conduct of the Emperor. The Mediterranean, between Elba and the coast of France, was narrowly looked after by British cruisers. The island of Elba itself was full of persons whom either jealousy or curiosity led to inquire into all the Emperor's movements and communications. Yet, with all these obstacles in his way, he contrived, without exciting apparently any suspicion in the breasts of those whose office it was to have stopped him, to embark with a large armed retinue; to elude the cruisers, through the midst of which he passed; and to land safely on the coast of France without the slightest interruption from anybody. From Antibes to Paris was one triumphal procession on the part of Napoleon, who was joined by the army everywhere;

and after a few days, during which the English press was inundated with all sorts of conflicting reports, the public was again electrified by the tidings that the Emperor was a second time installed at the Tuileries, and the restored Bourbons were at Ghent, whither they had fled in all haste as soon as Napoleon and his cortege began to approach their capital.

If the British public was unprepared for this crisis, such was by no means the case with the British government, which, on this occasion, showed that all its faculties were well awake. Instead of exhibiting vexation or chagrin at this sudden and unceremonious breach of the peace which had been so lately signed at Paris, the British ministers received Colonel Campbell, the officer whose duty it was to watch the motions of the Emperor, with marked distinction and kindness; nor was any time lost in taking such steps as the crisis imperatively demanded. In fact, never was less hesitation shown under circumstances at once so unprecedented and so critical. Parliament was at this moment sittting, and employed in the consideration of such economical difficulties as might naturally be expected to spring out of the changed circumstances of all Europe. A congress of plenipotentiaries was also assembled at Vienna, employed in settling such matters as were not settled by the terms of the treaty of Paris. Although employed, however, in matters the reverse of warlike—that is to say, in enacting at home a measure for the protection of the landed interest from an unequal struggle with foreign growers of corn, and in settling the balance of power in Europe

at the congress of Vienna, neither ministers nor plenipotentiaries seem to have hesitated as to the line of action to be pursued. The landing of Napoleon in France was known in London on the evening of the 9th of March; and on the 10th, ministers, in answer to a question, verified the fact; without, however, interrupting the discussion respecting the first corn-bill, then in progress. But if the surprise of the public at the news of the apparently desperate enterprise of Napoleon and its first success was not easy to be described, it became really indescribable when, in a few days after that astounding event, it became known that, on the 13th of March—that is to say, only three clear days after the events in the bay of Juan were known to the British cabinet, a declaration had been signed at Vienna by the representatives of all the powers, including Great Britain, the purport of which was to outlaw Napoleon, and to declare that "there could be neither peace nor truce with him;"—in short, a declaration, on the part of all Europe, of war against him until he should be utterly put down.

This, on the part of Lord Liverpool and his colleagues, was certainly "taking time by the forelock;" and, to add to the surprise, and as if by some fortunate anticipation of the crisis impending, on the 16th of March was unexpectedly laid before the House of Commons a treaty of peace with the United States of America, with whom bitter hostilities, accompanied by the most unhappy results, had been waged since 1812. This fortunate, sudden, and unlooked-for reconciliation set free such troops as were destined for

that service, and, as far as Great Britain was concerned, seemed to clear the stage for that life or death struggle with Napoleon which a series of rapid and singular incidents summarily decided on the field of Waterloo in the June of that year.

The consequences of the victory of Waterloo were decisive. It not only again restored the Bourbons to their dominions, and reinstated Europe in the position which was arrived at prior to March 1815, but it also enabled the British ministry, to a great extent, to deprive the French of that favourable position, commercially speaking, which they seemed likely to be able to assume after the first deposition of the Emperor Napoleon. By the advice of the English government, France was now subjected to a heavy contribution, and to the expense of the maintenance of a large army of observation for several years. This measure compelled the restored Bourbons to violate the financial policy of Napoleon, and to load France with a public debt and heavy additional taxes, which every year since that period has helped to augment. Thus, the commercial facilities of France have been diminished and crippled; but, as a tortuous policy often in the end turns upon itself, it may admit of a question whether this very measure, so astutely conceived and successfully executed, has not been, at bottom, a principal cause of the convulsions which have since again and again revolutionized France, and ultimately restored the very family which the congress at Vienna then fondly decreed for ever separated from the throne of that country. So much for the extra-

ordinary episode of "the hundred days," and the still stranger circumstances attending it.

Having disposed of the unlooked-for interruption to the peace which was obtained in the year 1814, it becomes necessary to recur back to that period, it being pregnant with events which, ultimately, exercised the greatest influence over the future career of the subject of this memoir as a politician and a statesman. It has already been stated that, as soon as the course of events, after the year 1812, began to foreshadow a coming catastrophe for the till then irresistible ruler of the French empire, a secret uneasiness as to the possible commercial position of this country, in the event of tranquillity on the Continent, began to take rise; that it seems to have originated with those directly interested in land; and was hinted at, as early as the year 1813, by the periodical press, though in terms studiously ambiguous and general.

As soon as this uneasiness began to take existence, it was not long in showing itself within the walls of the two Houses of Parliament. In consequence, even in 1813, there had been, in the House of Commons, discussions on the state of the corn-laws, which soon extended to the House of Lords. As the events of the war proceeded, the solicitude as to the efficiency of these protective laws, in case of peace, grew stronger; and, in 1814, committees of inquiry had prepared reports whereon to found a bill for giving additional stringency to these laws. As soon as these proceedings began to assume shape and importance, a reaction, as a matter of course, began to pervade the

public mind. When a people is told of "the blessings of peace," the universal notion attached to this expression is that of universal cheapness. The amazing rise in the prices, not only of all the luxuries, but of all the necessaries of life, which followed the hostilities against France in 1793, was by the people ascribed, without hesitation, to the war, and to the war alone. The science of money, real and fictitious, and of the phenomena which follow any addition to or diminution of its quantity, whether the addition be to currency strictly speaking, or to floating capital, is so intricate in itself, and in its nature so ill adapted to interest the minds of the great majority of men, that it is perfectly vain to attempt to explain these phenomena to the public, or to persuade a nation even to try to understand a matter in which national prosperity or adversity, happiness or misery, are so deeply involved. Had these truths, therefore, been familiar, instead of the contrary, to the leading politicians of the period, they could not have been successful in any endeavour to impress them upon the public mind.

But even to the statesmen of that day, the science of political economy was in reality a sealed book. Excepting by a very few persons in and out of parliament, the more recondite phenomena of money and currency were not understood; and hence, although it was well known to all concerned to know it, that the existing law, if not altered, necessitated a return to cash payments within six months after a peace; and although it was known to a few that the rise in prices, which had obtained throughout so long a period, was

mainly caused by a great and gradual depreciation of the current money, going on from 1793 up to that time; yet, by the nation at large, these prices were ascribed entirely to "the war;" and the intention of the landed interest to propose a new corn-bill was just as freely attributed to mere greediness and a selfish scheme to uphold rentals at the war-level, when peace should have rendered everything else cheap.

There were not wanting, however, even at this moment, individuals both in and out of parliament by whom the great bearings of this question were, with more or less of distinctness, apprehended and appreciated. Amongst these, the individual who probably possessed most completely the ear of the landed interest was Mr Charles C. Western, himself a great landed proprietor, and a man, moreover, of fair talent and extensive information. Mr Western formed a sort of isthmus or connecting link between the avowed partisans of Lord Liverpool's ministry and the landed interest as a whole. He was a man of far too much talent and independence of thinking to be a mere subservient of any cabinet; but his political leanings were those of moderate toryism, as far as such sentiments were compatible with much independence of thinking, and much sincerity and candour. On the economical questions which were agitated at that period, Mr Western had reflected much and freely, but with all the caution of one who had great landed possessions, and who well knew how the value of those possessions might be affected by rash changes, in whatever direction, in the value of

money. Amongst the Economists properly so called, however, Mr Western never would be placed, nor does his name appear in the list of the Bullion Committee of 1809-10. No man was yet better aware of their views and ultimate intentions; and, as his weight in parliament was great, few men were better acquainted with the feelings of the existing administration and of the individual tendencies of particular members of that administration. Upon the movements of all parties, Mr Western looked as from a sort of half-neutral ground; respected by all, and feared by not a few, who knew how much he was trusted by the landed interest in the House, and how deeply sometimes they were influenced by his opinions on subjects peculiarly interesting to them. Nor was Mr Western undeserving of this confidence, so placed and so founded. Of the position and prospects of the owners of the soil, and their tenantry, and all depending upon them, few persons knew more than he did; and of the effects upon their well-being of any changes in the economy of the country, few men indeed knew as much. Occupying the position which he did in society and in the House of Commons, it was not deemed wonderful anywhere that Mr Western should be found amongst those who urged forwards, both secretly and openly, an immediate alteration in the laws regulating the importation of foreign grain.

Nor was he in this work destitute of able auxiliaries; the ranks even of the Economists affording advocates of stringent restriction upon the introduction of for-

eign corn. Of these the most conspicuous was Mr William Huskisson, a man of some ability and much astuteness, who from a zealous advocate of the rights of man, as taught in Paris after 1789, contrived to gain favour as an admirer of Mr Pitt towards the end of that statesman's career. In the House of Peers, composed, as it is, almost exclusively of great owners of land, the advocacy of immediate and stringent change was more united and powerful than in the Commons, where the opposition is formed out of more heterogeneous materials. In fact, the Upper House was all but unanimous upon the subject.

It would be most unjust and unfair, however, to suppose that such men as Mr Western, in their advocacy of the first corn-bill, were actuated by mere selfish hankerings after augmented rents, whatever might be the case with many of their supporters. The truth was, that both Mr Western and Mr Huskisson were aware of the really critical position of the economy of the entire country at that period, a matter hidden from most of those who acted with them. The former gentleman in particular could not but perceive, and did perceive, that the errors in the conduct and the conclusions of all the conflicting parties had been such as to preclude almost an equitable arrangement of the momentous questions at issue. Equally must he have been aware that the ministerial party had, by their utter ignorance of the true position of the currency question, put it out of their own power to offer any effectual resistance to the now rapidly growing power of the political econo-

mists. It was becoming evident to every man in the House of Commons that the Economist party had increased vastly in influence since the eventful year of 1812. It was especially observed and noted that Mr Peel, undeterred by the prepossessions of his father, who opposed their measures to the end of his life, had been greatly impressed by the reasonings of Mr Horner and his followers, and that no opposition to their plans was to be expected from him. His colleagues in the ministry were, as Mr Western saw, in a position which rendered them just as impotent to offer any efficient resistance to the recommendations of the Bullion Committee if repeated at this time. This was evident enough.

The ministerial party had adhered with an unhappy pertinacity to that policy which first induced them, in defiance of proofs the most irrefragable, to deny *in toto* the existence of any depreciation in the existing money. Upon what possible ground, then, could the ministers resist the proposals of the Economists to direct the Bank of England and all other bankers to return to payments in specie, when, according to their own showing, such return to payments in the precious metals could not affect prices at all, being (as they must conclude) only a substitution of a certain amount of coins for an equal amount of paper withdrawn from circulation? Equally hopeless was it to expect from the ministers, who had already exhibited their determination not to give up the income-tax if they could avoid it, any great reduction of taxation, as a corollary to the measures of the Bullion Committee; for, if the current paper

had never been depreciated, how could a return to payments in coin augment the weight of our taxation?

Such was the position of the cabinet as to this vital question. From the party of Economists justice was as little to be hoped for. They had indeed, in that elaborate report* which they constructed in 1810, asserted and proved the growing depreciation in the value of the circulating money; but by adopting the blunder of fancying the extent of that depreciation was to be measured by the price of gold bullion, they fearfully under-rated that extent. From the returns, such as they are, it follows at all events that on the average of these years the current money of the country was depreciated at least *twenty-seven per cent.* below the value attributed to it by those who issued it. And it also

* The depreciation as measured by the prices of gold is as below:—

Years.	Price of Gold.	Above Mint Price.
	£ s. d.	
1809.	4 10 9	16½ per cent.
1810.	4 5 0	9 1/10 ...
1811.	4 17 1	24½ ...
1812.	5 1 4	30 ...
Sept. to Dec. 1812.	5 8 0	38½ ...
1813.	5 6 2	36 1/10 ...
Nov. 1812 to March 1813.	5 10 0	41 ...
1814.	5 1 8	30⅛ ...
1815.	4 12 9	18⅝ ...

These were the prices at these periods as given or collected by the bullion brokers and dealers; but so much melted coin was secretly sold, for fear of the penalty, at low prices, that the quoted prices as they exist are little more than nominal.—*Author's note.*

follows of necessity, and as a matter of course, that all the money engagements, enormous as they were, taking as we must do both public and private money engagements contracted through the period of these years and still out-standing, must have been contracted payable in a currency *twenty-seven per cent.* below its nominal value. This must be admitted by all who admit the depreciation to that extent; and yet the Economists' Committee in their report of 1810 recommended the currency to be restored to its former value, or, in other words, recommended *twenty-seven per cent.* on the average to be added to the taxes and to all out-standing money engagements contracted since 1809, without the recommendation of one single measure to shield the tax-payer and the debtor's interest generally from the infliction of injustice so flagrant and enormous. From men who could deliberately put forth such a recommendation of such a measure, Mr Western saw clearly that neither common justice nor common sense was to be expected; and he could not but see, at the same time, that just as little could be reasonably looked for at the hands of the only persons within the houses of parliament who could consistently oppose the Economists and their measures.

Of these persons was composed that third parliamentary party, amongst whom was Sir Robert Peel, who, disbelieving the conclusions of the Bullion Committee, and believing, on the other hand, that the depreciation of the circulating money had gone far beyond the limits assigned by the Economists, deemed

it upon the whole the safest as well as justest course to take no steps to restore it to its former value, but, on the contrary, either to take means to retain it at its then level, or to suffer it to go on imperceptibly depreciating further and further, at least until the burdens entailed by the war had been cleared off by repayments in the same currency in which they were contracted; after which some scale of adjustment of such private debts as required it might have been arranged, and the money of the country finally settled at some permanent basis of value.

These views were held by a small party within the walls of parliament; but their influence was trifling, and very naturally so when it was seen that they disagreed exceedingly as to the mode in which these things were to be done. One section held that a measure of value, in the shape of a currency of perpetually depreciating paper, was the greatest of all national benefits, and spurred men into enterprises by creating an appearance of gains which were merely apparent. Another section advocated a government paper money, to be regulated by the amount of taxation, and convertible into gold at the market price; whilst a third section pleaded for a mere alteration of the standard to suit the circumstances of the time, and proposed to withdraw the smaller notes, and, as a substitute, coin the half-ounce of gold into the same number of nominal pounds that the ounce formerly made. Such were the projects and such were the theories fashionable with projectors in currency matters; but as no one of these schemes

could even command a majority amongst the schemers, none could be adopted as a party measure; and the divisions of the opponents of the Economists reduced their opposition to a nullity in practice.

In this strange position of parties, Mr Western, and such of his followers as saw with his eyes, clearly perceived that the position occupied by the political economist party must ultimately and in no long time give them power to carry their own particular measures; and that the only practicable course remaining was to endeavour to exempt the landed interest, by means of some enactment, from the effect of these measures. And hence it was that the landed proprietors in both Houses, but more especially in that of the Peers, acting no doubt in part by Mr Western's advice, early bestirred themselves to set on foot those inquiries and collect that evidence upon which the corn-law of 1815 was eventually founded. Nor was this unknown to the Economists, who were quite aware that, on the part of the leaders of the landlords, the fear of the currency-measures known to be impending was a principal motive; and who accordingly offered a very mollified opposition to the bill, deeply as that bill was resented and violently as it was opposed out of doors. It seems, indeed, highly probable, and it has been asserted and not denied, that a tacit understanding, at this period, existed between the landed and economic parties,—the terms of which were, that the Economists should offer no serious opposition to a corn-law, upon the pledge that the landed interest would not oppose a return to specie payments, hav-

ing obtained protection for their own individual interests; and this assertion is certainly corroborated by the tone of the debates upon the corn-question, in which both sides seem to avoid mixing the question of currency with that of corn, closely connected as the two topics really are.

Such was the relative position of the different parliamentary parties in 1814, when the committee of inquiry into the state of agriculture, appointed by the House of Peers, got together that body of evidence, and laid before parliament and the nation that report, upon which the corn-law of the ensuing year was really based. It presents the same leading features that were afterwards exhibited by the speeches on the same side during the protracted debate on the corn-law of 1815. It deals chiefly with facts to the exclusion of theories. It adduces evidence of the most overpowering description to show that, whatever might be the causes of the advance in the average prices of agricultural produce which had proceeded onwards from 1793, that advance had been accompanied by a doubling of the expenses of tillage.* The absence of all allusion, however, to the fact of the depreciation of the currency and its consequences, renders many of the statements given in evidence highly delusive, and to an ordinary reader completely

* *Arthur Young, Esq.*—What do you conceive to be the lowest price of corn which will pay the farmer the late expenses of cultivation?—I have made a careful estimate of that; and, allowing the farmer 10 *per cent.* on his capital of £10 *per acre* on land of 40s. rent, I estimate that wheat must be 87s., barley 44s., and

puzzling. When, for instance, Mr Thomas Mills, a corn-factor, says, in reply to a question as to the price of

oats 34s., in order to balance these expenses. Including every expense, he will then receive 10 per cent on his capital.

COMPARISON OF THE EXPENSES OF ARABLE LAND.

(In 1804 the Board of Agriculture sent a circular letter through the greater part of the kingdom requesting returns of the expenses of cultivating 100 acres of arable land in the two periods of 1790 and 1803. In 1814 a similar inquiry was made for 1813, and it is from the average of these returns, made from forty-two counties, that the following table has been constructed.)

	1790.			1803.			1813.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Rent	88	6	3¼	121	2	7¼	161	12	7¾
Tithe	20	14	1¾	26	8	0¼	38	17	3¼
Rates	17	13	10	31	7	7¼	38	19	2¼
Wear and tear	15	13	5¼	22	11	10¼	31	2	10¼
Labour	85	5	4¼	118	0	4	161	12	11¼
Seed	46	4	10¼	49	2	7	98	17	10
Manure	48	0	3	68	6	2	37	7	0½
Team	67	4	10	80	3	0¼	134	19	8¼
Interest of Capital	22	11	11¼	30	3	8¾	50	5	6
Taxes		...			...		18	1	4
Total	411	15	11¾	547	10	11½	771	16	4½

Upon this table it is necessary to observe, that the article manure for 1790 and 1803 may be properly compared, because both are sent by the same persons and at the same time. But 1803 and 1813 cannot be compared, as the result must depend on accidental circumstances of situation and persons. In comparing therefore the totals of 1803 and 1813 this article of manure is to be deducted,—

Total of 1803,...	£547	10	11½	Total of 1813,...	£771	16	4½
Deduct Manure,	68	6	2	Deduct Manure,	37	7	0
	£479	4	9½		£734	9	4½

fine Dantzic wheat,—"If there was any such as we used to see some years ago, that would be worth 80s.

These are the totals for the comparison of 1803 with 1813.

The rise from 1790 to 1803 is 33 per cent.

The rise from 1803 to 1813 is 53 per cent.

Total of 1790,.....	£411	15	11¾
Deduct Manure,.....	48	0	3
	£363	15	8¾

Comparing this with the total of 1813 (manure deducted), the rise is 102 per cent.

Reports respecting Grain and the Corn-laws, 1814, *P.* 64.

Probable Average Produce of a Farm of 420 *Scotch Acres in East Lothian, value* £6 *per acre, requiring a capital of* £5463, 15s.

140	acres	Wheat,	10	bolls* per acre,	1400	bolls at 42s.	£2940	0
35	do.	Barley,	10	do.	350	... 30s.	525	0
35	do.	Oats,	12	do.	420	... 25s.	525	0
55	do.	Beans,	8	do.	440	... 25s.	550	0
7	do.	Tares at £10 per acre, ...					70	0
8	do.	Potatoes, at £10 per acre,.....					80	0
70	do.	Turnips, at £8 per acre,.....					560	0
70	do.	Grass, at £6, 6s. per acre, ...					514	10
							£5764	10
Deduct expenses of cultivation, rent, and seed,.....							5219	15
						Profit,.....£	544	15

* The boll of wheat, pease, and beans, is about 4 per cent. more than 4 Winchester bushels. The boll of barley and oats is 6 Winchester bushels. The Scotch acre contains one-fifth more than the English.

per quarter"—it is not to be supposed that this is true if the shillings were of the value of the silver

Yearly Expenses of the Cultivation of same Farm.

Keep of horses,	£550	0
Ploughmen and boys' wages,	425	0
Upper servant and two labourers,	132	0
Hand-hoeing and weeding different crops,	150	0
Reaping and harvesting,	280	0
Thrashing, dighting, and marketing grain,	120	0
Repairs on saddler, wright, and smith work,	200	0
Upholding stock of horses,	120	0
Repairs on houses and fences,	40	0
Repairs on threshing-machine,	25	0
Grass and turnip seeds,	105	0
Property-tax,	120	0
Assessed taxes,	30	0
Composition for statute labour on roads,	16	0
	£2313	0
Seed,	386	15
Rent,	2520	0
	£5219	15

Lords' Report, p. 101.—*Mr John Brodie's Evidence.*

Parish of Bradford, in the County of Somerset,

Containing 895 acres of arable; 827 acres meadow and pasture; 62 acres of orchard, and 6 acres of woodland.—Total, 1790 acres.

Value of gross produce, on an average from 1773 to 1782,	£4500	0	0	Average out-goings from 1773 to 1782,	£2526	7	0
				Interest on £4970 capital,	248	10	0
					£2774	17	0
				Net produce to pay landowner his rent, 19s. 6d. per acre,	1725	3	0
	£4500	0	0		£4500	0	0

1790 acres at 19s. 6d. is £1745, 5s.

mint-shilling, as it circulated prior to the year 1793. It is only true upon a consideration of the fact that the depreciation of the currency was then such as to render 80s. only equivalent to as much silver as would

Value of gross produce from 1783 to 1792 on an average,	£4691	0	0	Average out-goings from 1783 to 1792,	£2599	2	0
				Interest on £5200,	260	0	0
					£2839	2	0
				Net produce to pay the landlord at 20s. 6d. per acre,	1831	18	0
	£4691	0	0		£4691	0	0
				1790 acres at 20s. 6d. are £1834, 15s.			

Value of gross produce from 1793 to 1802 on an average,	£7162	10	0	Average out-goings from 1793 to 1802,	£3937	5	0
				Interest on £7900,	395	0	0
					£4332	5	0
				Net produce to pay the landlord rent at 31s. 6d. per acre,	2830	5	0
	£7162	10	0		£7162	10	0
				1790 acres at 31s. 6d. are £2819, 5s.			

Value of gross produce from 1803 to 1812, on an average,	£9420	15	0	Average out-goings from 1803 to 1812,	£5211	18	0
				Interest on £10,500,	525	0	0
					£5736	18	0
				Net produce to pay tax on property and rent at 41s. per acre,	3683	17	0
	£9420	15	0		£9420	15	0
				1790 acres at 41s. are £3669, 10s.			

buy a quarter of wheat, at that time, at Dantzic, which (adding freight and charges) would probably be about equal to 48 silver mint-shillings of 1793.—That the committee, themselves, had in view the possible consequences of a return to cash payments is quite certain, as they, in their second report, allude to the existing state of the currency and to the probability of a change; but none of the evidence taken bears, however remotely, upon that portion of the subject. It only goes to prove, which it effectually does prove, that the great nominal rise in the prices of all farming produce had not been a benefit to the farmer, unless he held under a long lease. At no period does he appear to have made more than five per cent. upon his capital, exclusive of such of his own

HEALBRIDGE FARM, IN BRADFORD, SOMERSET,

The property and in the occupation of Josiah Easton; containing 100 acres of arable; 150 meadow and pasture; 6 of orchard, and 4 of woodland.—260 acres.

Produce sold in 1812, including produce consumed by the family,	£1377	10	8	Out-goings in 1812,	£715	7	4½
				Interest on capital, £1540,	77	0	0
					£792	7	4½
				Net produce, exclusive of rent and property tax,	585	3	3½
	£1377	10	8		£1377	10	8
				Rent, 260 acres at 40s.,	£520	0	0
				Property tax to A and B, 3s. 6d. per £,	91	0	0
					£611	0	0

Lords' Report of 1814, *page* 113.

products as were consumed by his family. As his produce rose, so did the expenses of his tillage, and so did his rent: and to those to whom the question of currency and its depreciation is familiar, it will appear tolerably clear that the advance in the rental was not more than commensurate with the depreciation of the money in which it was paid. One inference however, from all these facts, was probably drawn by those who were most instrumental in getting together the evidence which enriches this report. They, no doubt, both dreaded and believed that the restoration of cash-payments by the bank of England, and a consequent diminution of the circulating medium, in company with great importations of grain, would produce a great reduction in the price of produce and in the scale of rents, whilst taxes, mortgages, and all other fixed engagements, remaining nominally the same, would be augmented in weight; and this dread it was which, in spite of all opposition from the people, carried the corn bill of 1815.

In the proceedings relative to the corn bill, neither Mr Peel nor Sir Robert Peel took any very prominent part, although the latter voted against it. In fact the opposition to it within the walls of the House of Commons was feeble, all the amendments proposed being rejected by large majorities. Out of doors the excitement was very great; so much so that it at last became necessary to employ soldiers to protect the members whilst entering and leaving the House. The entire debate was only remarkable for the misconceptions that existed, or appeared to exist,

on all sides with regard to the probable effects of the measure about which they were contending.

By Mr Western the currency portion of the question was designedly avoided; and he appeared to believe, and perhaps did believe, that whilst under the existing circumstances 80s. per quarter was the lowest price at which wheat could be grown, a mere restriction upon its importation would keep it at that price, after the return to cash-payments should have doubled the value of the current money of the country. That a man of Mr Western's intellect should altogether be possessed by this notion seems improbable; yet so little were the effects of alterations in the quantity of the circulating money then understood, and so destitute were men of the slightest idea of the real laws that regulate the increase or decrease of a population, that it is far from impossible, not only that Mr Western and his friends should believe this, but that they should also believe that a corn-law, once imposed, might become a part of the constitution of the country, and be cheerfully acquiesced in by future generations, upon the strange maxim that dear food is synonymous with high wages, and that the only check to population is a prudential defiance of the strongest law of nature on the part of those who are least capable of comprehending its supposed necessity. It was urged indeed by Sir Frederic Flood, in reply to Mr Western, that the price of corn and the multiplication of bank-notes had more to do with each other than was generally thought; and that it was absurd to try to fix the price of wheat by act of parliament, whilst the laws that

regulate money were unfixed, and the foreign relations of the country again unsettled by the landing, in France, of the Emperor Napoleon. Such observations were totally lost upon the House; and especially upon those who foresaw the future measures of the Economist party, and felt an instinctive necessity to lose no time in shielding those immediately interested in agriculture from their probable effects. The depression which had immediately followed the preparations for a return to cash-payments by the Bank of England in the autumn and winter of 1814, had, in short, practically impressed the House with the persuasion that a peace expenditure and low prices were, in some way or another, connected with each other; and to secure themselves, if possible, from this dreaded consequence was their determination, and they voted accordingly.

The Peers, as might naturally be expected, were more unanimous than the Commons, and they at once confirmed, with the exception of about a dozen dissentients, all that the Commons voted. That the younger Peel was quite acquiescent in the propriety of the measure for which he voted, it is not difficult to believe. Although it is highly probable that his mind had, at this time, begun to be impressed by the reasonings of the Economist party, it was utterly impossible that, at the age of twenty-seven, he could have any definite notion of the complicated considerations interwoven with such a question, supposing them even to have at that time been understood by those who professed to understand them. Whatever may be a man's natural talents and acquired accomplishments, such know-

ledge is never attained so early; nor, if it were, was Mr Peel by any means of an intellect likely to have thus early mastered such a question. Whatever other qualities of mind he might possess, he was the reverse of an original thinker. He who takes his opinions from others, and exercises caution in their adoption, may be fairly described as becoming wise by piecemeal. But upon most economical questions imperfect knowledge is worse than entire ignorance; and however strange the conclusion may now appear, there exists no ground for supposing it highly improbable that Mr Peel might, at this period, not deem it unreasonable to affirm the *minimum* price of wheat at *eighty shillings the quarter*, even when coupled with a determination to cancel all bank-notes for sums under five pounds, and to compel bankers to pay the rest on demand in standard gold and silver. Be this as it may, he seems to have willingly acquiesced in the provisions of the act; and when this momentous business was (as it was thought) satisfactorily settled, to have betaken himself, as was his wont, diligently to the immediate duties of his own department.

Of Mr Peel's government of Ireland, candour cannot say more than that it was a continuation of the system that has so long been pursued in that wretched country. It amounts, in fact, only to that which in pharmacy is called a doctoring of symptoms, without any attempt to touch the root of the evils which have, through so many centuries, afflicted that ill-starred nation. That Mr Peel's administration was able in its conduct, though erroneous in its principle, has

never been denied; nor can it be imputed to the secretary as a fault, that its direction was not otherwise. Whether Mr Peel, either at that or at any other period, clearly saw the great but remote causes of Irish unhappiness, it is useless to inquire; for had he been ever so fully aware of them, he wanted the power to remove them. They lie too deep to be touched by any temporary administrator, and are now interwoven with the very framework of society in Ireland.

To those who wish to know more, the mere contrast of the state of society in Scotland, which is also Celtic in origin, with that in the sister kingdom, is full of instruction. With Scotland the Union was the fruit of mutual agreement; with Ireland of conquest. In Scotland the form of religion professed by the majority is the established form; in Ireland the form professed by a small minority is the established form, whilst the majority are compelled by law to yield tithes and dues to the clergy of a religion which they cannot but believe to be a baleful and pernicious heresy. In Scotland the landed estates are for the most part in the hands of the descendants of the ancient possessors; in Ireland the landed estates are for the most part in the hands of aliens, who got them by forfeiture arising out of rebellion, too often fomented for that purpose. In Scotland the claim of the landlord is regulated in a great measure by the current rates of profit generally, by public opinion, and by the necessity of in some measure providing for the poor; in Ireland it is regulated only by the ability of

the poor tenant to pay the middleman or rack-renting landlord; whilst until lately the poor were absolutely uncared for and left to starve. In Scotland both agriculture and manufactures have been fostered and improved, and the farmer is possessed (save perhaps in the West Highlands) of more or less capital; in Ireland manufactures have not been encouraged; and the subletting and division of land amongst a poor and redundant population has been carried so far, as to cause ejectment from a holding to be almost a sentence of starvation, and famine to be a periodical visitant. Thus it has happened that, in Scotland, the people have learned to consider England as a friend and benefactress; whilst in Ireland they are too often taught to believe her an oppressor and a persecutor. Hence, whilst religious animosities are rare in one country, and whilst the rent of the landlord and stipend of the clergyman are cheerfully paid, the other is torn with theological feuds, and the attempts to extort rents and tithes from a disaffected peasantry are perpetual provocations of violence and bloodshed.

One advantage Scotland, since the union of the crowns, has unquestionably possessed. Her junction with England has opened a field for such surplus population as she had,—chiefly in the Western Highlands,—of which they have not been slow to avail themselves, and to such extent, that it is believed the Scotchmen and descendants of Scotchmen, living and born in England and in the colonies, equal the present population of Scotland itself. In this advantage Ireland has only recently participated to any extent, that is to say,

since the commencement of steam navigation rendered the trip across the Irish sea easy and cheap. For some time Irishmen were absolutely debarred by statute from settling in England; and when these statutes fell into disuse, prejudice operated almost as extensively.*

Such are the different feelings which centuries of different treatment have engendered, and the social difficulties which these feelings have of necessity created. That the insuperable nature of these difficulties made a deep and lasting impression upon the mind of Mr Peel whilst Secretary for Ireland, some of his after-expressions with regard to that country sufficiently proved; nor could any one paint these evils in stronger colours than he sometimes deemed it necessary to do. In the course of a debate on the army estimates in February 1816, the Irish Secretary entered into the following extraordinary details on the employment of the soldiery in Ireland in the suppression of illicit distillation, as well as of insurrectionary movements in the wilder districts of Ireland:—

"It must not be forgotten (said Mr Peel) that the employment of a military force in Ireland, under existing circumstances, is calculated to save the government of that country from the necessity of recurring to those measures of civil rigour which parliament had sanctioned with its approbation. In some districts, where the military was not employed, they had been compelled to suspend trial by jury, under the operation of the Insurrection Act; but every one would allow that it was better to deter from the commission of crime than to

* 1 Henry V. cap. viii.

transport for it. If they could succeed in deterring these, there was not the necessity to proclaim certain districts. What he asserted was no visionary speculation. Events, such as he now described, were passing at that moment. The act to which he alluded had been applied to several baronies in Tipperary, upon the unanimous application of forty of the magistrates. He believed he was right in saying the unanimous application. In some cases, indeed, it had been refused; but he knew as a fact, that not less than seventy-six magistrates of that county, united for the paramount object of maintaining the public peace, had applied to government for the application of that bill. A similar course had been pursued in the county of Westmeath. It was proposed in some counties to remove the soldiers; but the answer was by the magistrates, 'If you remove the troops you must give us the Insurrection Act, as it will be impossible to do without it.' Even on constitutional grounds, therefore, and as calculated to prevent a recurrence to these really severer measures, he would venture to appeal to the House for its approbation of the alternative of employing the military to aid the civil power. With respect to its employment in another way, by doing the duty of custom-house officers, he wished to observe that this system had prevailed in Ireland at least as far back as in 1799. At that period, a regulation for the employment of a military force in that service was adopted. It was stated to be imperatively necessary for the suppression of illicit distillation; and it was further ordered, that any officer hesitating to employ his men on that service should be brought to a court-martial for disobedience of orders. He stated that, to prove the propriety of a remark made at the commencement of his address, that even if it should be thought that the introduction of a military force was a vicious practice, it was at all events unavoidable without the accomplishment of other essential reforms.

"He should now state the extent to which the military arm had been so employed, and in order also to show that it had

not been the policy of one single government merely, he should mention that, in 1806, under the government of the honourable gentlemen opposite, 448 military parties were employed in detecting and frustrating the practice of illicit distillation; in 1807 there were 598 military parties; in 1808 there were 431; in later periods still more; and in the half-year ending the 31st December 1815, there were 1889. No one, he presumed, would deny that the morals and habits of the lower classes were not only corrupted by the dreadful extent to which that illicit distillation was carried, but that the laws of the country were violated, and that the revenue was greatly diminished by it. In order that the House might be enabled to judge of the character of those who carried on those practices, as well as of the danger attending their detection or apprehension, he would mention one circumstance that came within his own knowledge. In a district in the north-west of Ireland, well known to the gentlemen of that country as one where illicit distillation is carried on to an enormous excess, frequent seizures were made by parties of twenty to forty men, who generally had to risk an actual engagement with the offenders. In one instance he recollected the soldiers were fired at, and no less than two hundred rounds of musketry were discharged in their own defence. They succeeded in their seizures, however, but on their return were again attacked, their seizures taken from them, and they themselves obliged to seek shelter in a house on the road, where they maintained a contest with the assailants till they were relieved by two hundred men who were marched to their assistance. Such occurrences sufficiently showed the necessity of employing a military force, but he would again guard against its being supposed that he considered these temporary remedies as at all calculated to afford any permanent relief. He was as fully convinced of their inadequacy in that respect as any honourable member could be; but whilst that disposition to turbulence existed, would it be contended that the crimes connected with it ought

to go unpunished? Would it be said that desperate bands that roamed about the country at night ought to remain unmolested?

"Perhaps it would be said that the course of policy hitherto pursued in Ireland was a bad one. Let that be granted, then, for the sake of argument; still, was it possible to remove the evils of that bad and imperfect policy in an hour—or by the 25th of April? Would it be possible, even to gentlemen opposite, to change on a sudden the whole habits and manners of so large a class of the community, and to introduce, as by magic, a radical and effectual reform? It was utterly impossible. He was perfectly satisfied of the inefficiency of these temporary remedies, but meanwhile the hand of the robber must be arrested, or else the whole frame of civilized society must be now dissolved, and a residence in Ireland be rendered absolutely impracticable. He was of opinion that good might be done in that country by a reformation of the police, and he should prefer an army of police, if he might so call it, to a military army. He deeply regretted the very imperfect character of the police in Ireland. Since he had the honour of filling the station he occupied, he had turned much of his attention to the subject of police, and proposed alterations which the House had sanctioned. Real, substantial, and permanent reform, however, amongst the lower classes, could be looked for only from the general diffusion of knowledge, and from enlightening their minds. From such sources of reform he anticipated the grandest and the noblest results. (Hear, hear, hear). He could state it as a fact within his own knowledge, that the greatest eagerness for instruction prevailed amongst the lower classes. It was the duty of every one, even in these times of economy, not to obstruct the progress or the limits of education, which ought to be as widely as possible diffused. It would be infinitely better for Ireland and for this country to have a well instructed and enlightened Catholic population than an ignorant and a bigoted one!"—*Hansard's Debates*, vol. xxxii. p. 926.—1816.

On various other occasions during his Irish secretaryship and afterwards, Mr Peel drew the same terrible pictures of the social state of Ireland, and looked to the spread of education as a means of palliating, perhaps of curing it. Nothing can exceed, in their terrible and shocking interest, some of the scenes of deliberate murder arising out of ejectments, or seizures of crops for arrears of tithes or of rents, which he delineated from time to time: murders, as to which no man would give evidence, nor even serve on the coroner's jury, which on such occasions was mostly of necessity formed of policemen in the absence of all others. For these dreadful and anomalous exhibitions, Mr Peel seems to have regarded education as the sole remedy.

On one occasion, it having been objected that the most disaffected persons in Ireland were to be found amongst the schoolmasters, Mr Peel replied, that "this observation made for his views, because education would put the people out of the power and influence of these persons, with whom they would then be on a level." The rejoinder, candour must admit, is more ingenious than satisfactory. If education did not prevent disaffection amongst the class of teachers, it would be far from easy to show how it was to cure it in their pupils, even on the supposition that they were all as well educated as their former schoolmasters. But admitting for the sake of argument that Ireland is the worst educated country in Europe (which is admitting too much), it seems yet impossible to conceive how the mere absence of book-learning, or what in modern phrase is termed education, could reduce the people

of that miserable realm to the half-brutified state in which millions of them are.

Taking Ireland as she is, there must, in this nineteenth century, be more education than existed in England in the reign of Edward III. or Henry V., when even reading and writing were mostly confined to the clergy, and a nobleman executed a document by merely affixing his seal and making his mark. Yet let those who think education a cure for social evils, read Chief Justice Fortescue's description of England, as she was towards the end of the reign of the latter monarch, and compare it with the state of Ireland for the last two centuries. Whether, however, the notions of the Irish Secretary as to the curative efficacy of education be well founded or delusive, it was clear he had no power to put them to the test of experiment. His whole policy in Ireland therefore was of necessity that of coercion, or Orange ascendency, which he defended as a thing inevitable under the existing circumstances. It would be well for those who carp at Mr Peel for taking this course, to show how it was possible for him to have done otherwise.

It is well known, that in Ireland political neutrality, and even political moderation, are not practicable in the case of any man who is prominent. "He who is not for us is against us," forms the motto of all parties in the state; and had Mr Peel attempted to conciliate or coquette with the pro-catholic and liberal party, he must have fatally weakened his government without obtaining any favour from his opponents. That he viewed the repressive measures which he employed

but as the bitter fruits of a false social position, is evident in his own frank avowals, which there is no reason for disbelieving. He himself styled them "temporary and unsatisfactory expedients;" and in due time he was fated to feel that, in so saying, he had uttered nothing less than the truth. In carrying out these expedients, it must at all events be admitted, that Mr Peel exhibited great practical ability. Granting that the state of Ireland really required that which he styled "an army of police," it must be owned that, under his auspices, that army was drilled and disciplined after a fashion that had not been seen before. This is generally admitted; and "Peel's police" in Ireland has been found to be as efficient in the prevention of outrage, from whatever cause arising, as "Peel's police" in London has been amongst the hundred thousand thieves and abandoned females which are asserted to be congregated in the heart of our overgrown metropolis.

Amidst all the discussions which arose out of topics so exciting as the corn bill, the agitated state of Ireland, and the great fiscal changes necessarily brought about by the astonishing political changes in France, one measure ought, however, to be recorded as emanating from the elder Peel, which must ever redound to the credit of his name, and also of that of his son, with whose concurrence it was doubtless brought before the House. This measure, which was perhaps in compliment to the younger Peel supported by Mr Horner and the other Economists, had for its object a limitation of the hours of labour imposed upon

children employed in cotton-mills. It was proposed by Sir Robert Peel, that no child under ten years of age should be so employed, and that the hours of legal employment should not exceed twelve, including the periods allowed for meals. This, Sir Robert stated, would reduce the daily period of actual work to ten hours,—quite sufficient, he thought, for children of all ages from ten to fourteen or fifteen years, to whom a longer period of exertion was, he said, very injurious.

The parliamentary political economists of that day had not, it should seem, arrived at the conclusion that the scientific way of dealing with such cases is to let the weak, by their own management, adjust their relations with the strong; for Sir Robert Peel's motion was powerfully supported by Mr Horner, at that time the Coryphæus of the party within the walls of the House of Commons.

"Mr Horner observed, that the former measures, and even the present bill, as far as he could understand its object, fell far short of what parliament should do on the subject. The practice, which was so prevalent, of apprenticing parish children in distant manufactories was as repugnant to humanity as any practice which had ever been suffered to exist by the negligence of the legislature. These children were often sent one, two, or three hundred miles from their place of birth; separated for life from their relatives, and deprived of the aid and instruction which, even in their humble and almost destitute situation, they might derive from their friends. The practice was altogether objectionable on this ground, but even more so from the enormous abuses which had existed in it. It had been known that, with a bankrupt's effects, "a gang" (if he might use the word) of these children had been put up

to sale, and were advertised publicly as part of the property. A most atrocious instance had been brought before the Court of King's Bench two years ago, in which a number of these boys, apprenticed by a parish in London to one manufacturer, had been transferred to another, and had been found by some benevolent persons in a state of absolute famine. Another case more horrible had come to his knowledge whilst on a committee up stairs—that, not many years ago, an agreement had been made betwixt a London parish and a Lancashire manufacturer, by which it was stipulated that, with every twenty sound children, one idiot should be taken! A practice, in which it was even possible that cases of this kind might arise, should not be suffered to exist; and now, or in the next session, when the bill should be discussed, should meet with the most serious consideration."—*Hansard's Debates*, vol. xxxi. p. 624.—1815.

On a former occasion, Sir Samuel Romilly had made statements of a similarly revolting character: one of which was, that it was on record that, towards the close of the last century, a young female spinner, against whom her master had conceived highly vindictive feelings, was, by his contrivance, stifled or burned to death by being shut up in a heated oven! That Sir Robert Peel's benevolent intentions have been frustrated, and are not carried into effect even at this time, is not creditable either to the feelings of those engaged in the cotton manufacture or to the school of political economists, who, unlike Mr Horner, have opposed every recent attempt to carry an efficient "ten-hours' bill," on the ground that such matters are best left to regulate themselves. If this strange principle be carried out, and it be affirmed

that it is no part of the duty of a government to protect the helpless from the cupidity of the powerful, it is difficult to conceive for what purpose a government is constructed; and how little public opinion can be trusted to investigate and remedy such evils, is evident in the fact, that during this very period, philanthropy was taking a "long range" across the Atlantic in behalf of the negro slave, whilst English children were put up to auction at our very doors, unnoticed and unredressed.

The remainder of Mr Peel's official service in Ireland presents only a continuation of that coercive system which alone he was permitted to carry out, but the exercise of which was clearly often painful to his feelings, believing it, as he avowedly did, to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. With regard to Ireland, he palpably entertained feelings very similar to those so powerfully and energetically enunciated by Swift, who seems to have applied to that ill-starred country the bitter words of Livy, "nec vitia nostra, nec remedia, pati possumus." In 1817, Mr Grattan again brought the claims of the Roman-catholic portion before the House in shape of a motion for a committee to inquire into these claims, and was again opposed by Mr Peel, in an address no doubt of much power, but certain portions of which must, twelve years afterwards, have embarrassed him exceedingly in the recollection. The motion was negatived by a narrow majority of 24 of a House consisting of 466 members; whilst those who paired off on either side were exactly equal in numbers. This to most men must have been evidence

tolerably conclusive that the existing system of ruling Ireland could not possibly endure for any great length of time; and thus in reality it probably appeared to Mr Peel, whose able speech on this occasion gave him vast credit with his party, and not a little galled his opponents, who now regarded him as a champion pledged and sworn to fight out the cause of Catholic exclusion to the last ditch. It is probable, however, that the vote of that very night gave Mr Peel a glimpse of the untenable nature of the position which he defended with so much ability. Some of his own strongest expressions on that occasion appear to lead irresistibly to that conclusion. At all events, it probably led to that abandonment of the office of Secretary for Ireland, which he carried into effect during the following year, although his ostensible reason was of a nature very different. In fact, from and after the vote of that night, Mr Peel must have felt that the office of ruling Ireland must become every year more and more onerous, and to a sensitive mind more and more painful; and he must have felt also, that any event or measure which should materially weaken the influential action of government, must inevitably imperil to the uttermost an ascendency already sinking by imperceptible degrees. The course of events, if this were the case in fact, soon afforded him a colourable opportunity for relinquishing his office.

Mr Abbott, the Speaker of the House of Commons, had for some time contemplated a retirement from the onerous duties of that high office, and towards the end of the session of 1817, this resolution was car-

ried into effect. Mr Abbott was called up to the House of Peers by the title of Lord Colchester, and on his creation, he of course vacated his seat as member for the University of Oxford, which place he had for some years represented.

That Mr Peel should be ambitious to become one of the representatives of this ancient and famous seat of learning, was only natural; and it was equally natural, that those members of the government who were most bitterly opposed to the claims of the Catholics should desire to secure this honour for him who, in their estimation, promised to be the unflinching and invincible champion of the penal code. In Oxford University, at that period, to secure a preference for a professor of High Tory and High Church Protestant-ascendency principles, was no difficult matter in the abstract. To Lords Liverpool and Eldon it was easy; and Mr Peel was accordingly, with hardly an attempt at opposition, elected to fill the place so long held by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Here was a good ostensible ground for leaving Ireland and the office of Irish Secretary, which Mr Peel, much to the regret of a government that even then seemed at times to be tottering towards total disruption, relinquished accordingly, in 1818, without accepting any other office.

It is more than probable that the Lord Chancellor Eldon, to whose influence in the university Mr Peel mostly owed his success, was partly incited to the feat by the pleasure of disappointing Mr Canning, who aspired to succeed the Speaker in this honour-

able position, but who, amongst the other coquetries with liberalism which formed a part of his selfish and tortuous course, and at last obtained for him a brief term of uneasy power, had given a qualified support to the Catholic cause. The retirement of Mr Peel at this juncture was unquestionably against the wishes of the cabinet, which then, and for some years after, was retained in office chiefly by the hatred of the Regent, afterwards George IV., to their Whig opponents. Whatever might be the real motives of the Irish Secretary, however, on this occasion, they prevailed, and he quitted Ireland and his office together. For his easy triumph over Mr Canning, achieved through the friendship of Lord Eldon, his noble patron was a few years afterwards made to pay dearly. For the present, everything ran smoothly, and Mr Peel continued to give his able support to the government of which he had now ceased to form a part.

CHAPTER V.

Mr Peel's Political Position in 1818—Fall of Prices—Consequent Distress—Embarrassment of Ministers—Second Bullion Committee—Mr Peel made its Chairman—Mr Ricardo—His Character—His great Influence—Mr Hudson Gurney warns the Bullion Committee—Misgivings of Lord Grey—First Bullion Report—Its vague Character—Committee of Peers—Second Bullion Report—Mr Peel moves Resolutions—He apologizes for his previous Votes—Asserts the Price of Gold to be the Measure of Depreciation—Proposes a Gold Standard—Resists a Lower Standard—Ridicules the Advocates of Paper Money—Sir Robert Peel opposed to his Son—Mr Gurney and Alderman Heygate oppose the Resolutions—Mr Tierney—Arrogant Speech of Mr Ricardo—Its Omissions and Absurdities—Resolutions and Cash Payments Act carried—The Distress of the Country increases—Reform Agitation—Catastrophe at Manchester—Mr Peel defends the Manchester Magistracy.

Having thus, in 1818, severed his actual and official connexion with the administration of that day, Mr Peel, still a young man, and with a considerable reputation both as a man of business and as a parliamentary debater, might be said to begin the world of politics anew, but with this responsibility upon his head, that his first acts—as is the case with all men, whether political aspirants or simple citizens—must probably give tone and colour to the whole of his future existence. It has already been observed that the party of Economists in parliament who, during

the closing vicissitudes of the war, had been little heard of, assumed a new importance as soon as the advent of tranquillity rendered questions of domestic economy the only prominent and the most pressing questions. Each of the various acts of parliament by which the issues of inconvertible paper money had been sanctioned, contained (as has been before remarked) one important clause, which pledged the country to a return to cash payments within six months after the signature of a definitive treaty of peace. The preparations of the directors of the Bank of England to comply with the law had, as early as 1814, produced a general fall of prices, especially in farm produce, so extensive as greatly to alarm the landed interest, and to urge Mr Western and his friends to that compact with the Economists which enabled them to pass the Corn Bill of 1815. When, after the final ruin of the Emperor Napoleon at Waterloo, those preparations were again renewed, the same depression was continued and aggravated; and the distress both of farmers and manufacturers as well as tradesmen generally, to whom this phenomenon was as new as interesting, gave rise to great and general agitation.

That the cessation of a portion of the enormous government expenditure of that time might in some small degree be a cause of this pressure, may be admitted; but that the main cause of the collapse and consequent suffering was the sudden diminution by the bankers of their circulating paper, will not be denied by any intelligent person at the present day.

That this was understood by Lord Liverpool and his administration is very doubtful; but, at all events, having denied that the general advance of prices up to 1814 was caused by the depreciation of the current money arising from its redundancy, it would not have been consistent in them to attribute the fall and pressure after 1815 to the diminution of that paper. It became therefore their policy, in answer to all petitions descriptive of distress, to employ phrases as indefinite as possible; and petitioners, accordingly, were told that the phenomena which caused their complaints were temporary in their nature, being merely the natural consequences of "a transition from war to peace." How far this oracular response satisfied the petitioners, it is not easy to say; but it satisfied the Economists, who, bent upon driving the ministry to a speedy return to cash payments, were not anxious to hear the existing pressure openly ascribed to the preparations making by the bankers for that measure.

In point of fact, the Economist party, to a certain extent, shared the delusion of the ministers. They had all along persisted in the fatal blunder of believing that the extent of the depreciation of the currency during the war was measured by the prices of gold bullion; and gold bullion having, as soon as the bank began to curtail its discounts, fallen down again nearly to four pounds the ounce, the Economists concluded that the worst was now past, and that the grand measure of a return to a currency based upon gold and silver might shortly be achieved, without much further depression either in commerce or agriculture. In

pursuance of this persuasion and this resolve, they had, after the landed interest had been quieted by the enactment of the new Corn-law, prevailed upon ministers merely to respite the paper currency in its inconvertible state by short acts from session to session, and to allow of the appointment of a committee, to be composed mostly of themselves, in order to agree upon the details of a bill framed for the prompt execution of a measure which was to shed a new lustre upon the science of political economy. For this committee it had become necessary, however, to find a new head, Mr Horner, the chairman of the Bullion Committee of 1810, being now dead. In this exigence the committee cast their eyes upon Mr Peel. It was now well known that the doctrines of the Economists had produced a great impression upon his mind. He had recently left an official post of importance; and it was believed he might, if he chose, again become a member of the government in some other capacity. The vast wealth and commercial influence of his father, Sir Robert Peel were notorious; and all these recommendations combined to render a rising young man like Mr Peel an eligible chairman of this committee,* to whom the virtual decision of a question of importance

* The committee of 1819 consisted of Messrs Vansittart, Tierney, Canning, Littleton, Wellesley Pole, Lamb, Huskisson, Frederic Robinson, Grenfell, Bankes, Stuart Wortley, Ashurst, Frankland Lewis, Manning, Wilson, Abercromby, Lord Castlereagh, Sir James Macintosh, Sir John Newport, Sir John Nicholl, and Mr Peel (chairman). A proposition to add Mr Brougham's name was lost by a small majority. The committee was appointed on the 3d February 1819.

so vast and so vital was about to be intrusted. In pursuance probably of this reasoning, and not from any supposition of his superior knowledge of this great question, Mr Peel was accordingly selected as chairman of the Bank Committee, which was balloted for early in February 1819.

The first act of the Bank Committee was, on the 5th April 1819, to present to the House a short report, coupled with a proposition, which gave rise to many misgivings, many hopes, and some sharp discussion. In this preliminary debate it was that a new and important actor appeared upon the scene, in the person of Mr David Ricardo, who seems to have entered the House during the period betwixt the appointment of the committee and this its first public acts, but who, though not upon the committee, exercised a paramount influence upon its decisions and those of the House of Commons with regard to this vital question. He was a man unquestionably of considerable talent; but who having been the maker of a great fortune upon the stock exchange from small beginnings, and who having written speciously and with much scientific pretension upon a subject very little understood or studied, was much overrated by those who worship wealth however obtained, and by those who mistake the appearance of knowledge for the reality. On his entrance into the House of Commons, he at once, as by common consent, took the place of Mr Horner as leader and oracle of the Economists within the House; and to his *dictum* it was chiefly owing that a measure of importance so paramount as that of the

return to cash-payments was so unanimously and compendiously disposed of by the legislature.

The motion which Mr Ricardo began by supporting was founded upon a short report presented by the Bank Committee, which is only worthy of particular notice in so far as it exhibits on the part of the Bank Directors an extraordinary lack of that sort of knowledge which was requisite to enable them at this critical period to understand their own position and that of the establishment which they conducted. It has been already stated that, very shortly after the war, and as soon as the banks began to narrow their discounts, the price of gold bullion sank down to four pounds one shilling the ounce: at which price at this time it remained. Despite this difference betwixt the market price of gold in bullion and the mint price at which gold coin was issued of £3, 17s. 10½d. the ounce, the bank directors had, with an infatuation not easily conceivable, commenced paying all their notes, of a date prior to 1817, and all fractional sums under five pounds, in coin. This issue of coin, being unaccompanied by a further and sufficient diminution of bank notes, was of course thus circulated at a rate below its real value as metal, and to melt or to export it was a profitable transaction. It was asserted by Mr Peel, when he presented the report, that six millions had been issued in this way, and had mostly found their way to France, where they were melted and recoined. The motion, based on the report, was to ask leave to bring in a bill to restrain the bank from continuing in this absurd course,—and thus

stop the transit of gold from the country. On this occasion the House violated its own rules, and passed the bill in haste, at the instance of the committee; but not without bringing on a discussion which proved that, notwithstanding a remarkable apparent unanimity, misgivings as to the course likely to be recommended by the committee existed in the breasts of some members, who could not be induced to believe the impending restoration of cash-payments either so easy or so salutary a measure as its advocates seemed to think it. Amongst others, Mr. Gurney, after finding fault with this hasty interference with the bank on the part of the legislature, boldly added, that "in saying this, he wished to guard himself from being understood to be one of those who were sanguine enough to expect that gold should, under the burdens contracted during the late war, ever permanently fall, or indeed be forcibly reduced, to the mint price of £3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce, without dragging down the prices of all other things to a degree that would render these burdens absolutely unbearable." Mr Gurney, like many others, had not been able to anticipate the amount of pressure and consequent suffering which a people, at once the most industrious and most patient on record, may be brought to endure; but the warning, though disregarded, was as bold as it was sagacious.

In the House of Peers the principal opponent of the measure was Earl Grey, who, after taking credit for his prediction in 1797 that the cessation of cash-payments would last far longer than was generally anti-

cipated, proceeded to warn the Lords against hastily sanctioning a step which for aught they knew might be really intended to smooth the way for a longer continuance of the inconvertible paper system. In short, Earl Grey seems to have, for the moment, suspected that the committee, finding the obstacles to an equitable resumption of cash-payments insuperable, had devised this mode of gradually accustoming the public mind to the idea of a permanent resort to a paper circulation, to which the Earl seemed to be decidedly opposed. What was the precise nature of the difficulties which the noble Earl's imagination had conjured up it would be useless to conjecture, as he was soon to learn that they were at all events unrecognised by the Commons' committee, whose theory was of a much more pliable and convenient description. Nor did Lord Grey's objections find more favour with the majority of the Peers, who passed the proposed bill as rapidly as the Commons had done.

When Mr Peel proposed to the House of Commons to pass the short bill of restriction upon the partial cash-disbursements of the Bank of England, he at the same time assured the House that this measure, instead of being intended to delay, would tend to accelerate the period of a complete resumption of paper convertibility, and undertook that, after a very short pause, the committee should bring in a report upon which immediate measures for the restoration of a metallic currency might be based. This promise the committee completely redeemed. On the 6th of

May 1819, Mr Peel presented to the House the second report of the Bank Committee, which was, of course, laid upon the table, and printed for the use of members. As a document, it is not remarkable. It goes into a particular history of those ill-judged payments on the part of the bank which led to the first brief report-notice of the committee, and then goes on to show that, as far as the ability of this country to obtain and retain a sufficient share of the precious metals is concerned, the resumption of cash payments might safely be enacted. This was a point upon which one would have thought there needed not to have been any doubt; the material question was, what effect upon all fixed engagements, public and private, the change from a depreciated currency to a currency at par with gold was likely to have; but this the committee leave untouched. The most curious portion of the document is the difference of opinions which it details as to the extent of the issues of the country banks. To ascertain, to a certainty, this extent at any one period, there existed no data, yet upon the amount of these issues the question of the real extent of the depreciation of the money circulating during the war mainly, and for the most part, depended.

"Mr Loyd (says the report) expressed an opinion that the issue of paper by the country banks might be from *forty to fifty millions*, but your committee are rather led to infer from the general tenor of the information before them, that the amount of this branch of the paper circulation, throughout Great Britain, has never exceeded from *twenty to twenty-five millions*."

Mr Loyd was the then acting partner of the great banking firm of Jones, Loyd, and Co., and a gentleman who, from his necessary insight into the scale of business of great numbers of country banking establishments, must have attained to a more correct notion than that of most men of the extent of the country circulation. Mr Loyd probably *averaged* the circulation of the nine hundred country banks then in existence at from £50,000 to £55,000 each,—no immoderate computation; and this gives an aggregate circulation of "forty to fifty millions." Having been asked as to the reduction of this portion of the circulation after 1815, "Mr Loyd stated (says the report) that the circulation of the country banks was at its highest in 1813 and 1814, but was considerably reduced in 1816 and the beginning of 1817." And being asked as to the amount outstanding at the latter period, when compared with the former, he replied,—"I can hardly say: I should think it was reduced nearly one-half."

The report presented to the House of Peers by their committee was very similar to that of the Commons' committee, but it went further in the attempt to reduce the issues of the country bankers to a contemptible amount. The calculations given in the Lords' report seem to have been based upon the statements of a Mr Sedgwick, upon what data themselves founded does not appear. They are very extraordinary. The aggregate circulation at its highest point—that is to say in 1814, is put down as follows:—

1814	Bank of England,	£26,901,000
„	Country Banks,	21,672,000
	Total,	£48,573,000

which, as there were then nine hundred country banks, gives them an average circulation of only £24,000 each,—a result next to incredible, when it is remembered that the Bank of England, between 1797, when her circulation was only £9,820,190, and 1815, when that circulation was £27,298,290, had trebled the amount of her issues; and the country banks from about, as is supposed, 200 in number, had passed 800; this being accompanied by a rise in the prices of grain and all the greater articles of consumption of one hundred per cent., and an increase of population unknown in England before that time. The recommendations embodied in the two reports were nearly similar. They limn out a plan for the gradual resumption of cash-payments by the Bank of England, in the following words, quoting from the report of the Commons' committee:—

"That on a day to be fixed by parliament, not later than the 1st of February 1820, the bank shall be required to deliver gold, of standard fineness, assayed and stamped as before-mentioned, in exchange for their notes (an amount of not less than sixty ounces of gold being demanded) at £4, 1s. per ounce; that being the market price nearly of standard gold in bars on an average of the last three months. That, on or before the 1st of October 1820, the bank shall pay their notes in gold of standard fineness, at the rate of £3, 19s. 6d.; and on or before the 1st of May 1821, as before-mentioned, at the ancient rate of £3, 17s. 10½d."

Thus, having admitted the fact of a depreciation of the current money arising from an over-issue of the inconvertible bank-paper of every kind, but having sedulously endeavoured to bring evidence to negative the extent of that depreciation, these two committees recommend an additional value to be given to that circulation by diminishing its quantity until an ounce troy of gold should be purchasable in bank-notes at the rate of £3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce, without making the slightest allusion to the ruinous effect of the operation as affecting the enormous mass of money-engagements outstanding, both public and private: the landed interest, with Mr Western at their head, having taken up the most erroneous idea, that, by prohibiting grain from being imported until the average price of wheat passed *eighty shillings per quarter*, they would prevent wheat from falling below that price, be the change in the value of money what it might.

On the 24th May 1819, the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr Peel, took into its consideration the report of the secret committee on the state of the bank. The course followed on this momentous occasion was the usual course. Mr Peel moved the adoption of four resolutions, embodying the recommendations put forth in the report of the committee, upon which, if carried, a bill for the resumption of cash payments was to be founded. These resolutions, which Mr Peel moved in a speech of much ability and great length, gave rise to a debate the most extraordinary perhaps that ever took place in the House of Commons, of which Mr Peel's own *palinodia*

with regard to the entire question of depreciation, and the vote which he had given in 1811 negativing the existence of that depreciation, was not the least extraordinary portion. One thing is palpable and evident in this debate, and that is, the truth that the majority of the House, and even a majority of those who spoke, were devoid of any intelligible idea of that depreciation of the current money which the report itself admitted, without determining its range and extent. Of Mr Peel's speech on this all-important occasion, the limits and plan of this work will only admit of a sketch or outline being given. By it, one point which was before suspected, was fully proved; that is to say, the total ascendency over Mr Peel's mind of the doctrines of the Economists, as promulgated by Mr Horner, and now by Mr Ricardo, who, though young in the House, acted a most important part in this debate. After a few sentences of preliminary remark of a general and apologetic nature, Mr Peel thus proceeded:—

"In stating the grounds upon which his opinion was formed, he repeated the expression of his hope that he would be favoured with a patient hearing, which was the more necessary considering the *peculiar dryness* of the subject, and that nothing was less calculated to excite a lively attention, or to produce an animated discussion. But his mind was relieved from considerable anxiety in the difficult and laborious task which he was induced to undertake by the concurrent opinion of the gentlemen with whom he acted in the committee, and the great respectability of the evidence upon which that opinion was founded. He was free to say that, in consequence of that evidence, and the discussions upon it, his opinion with regard to this question had undergone a material change. He

was ready to avow, without shame or remorse, that he went into the committee with an opinion very different from that which he at present entertained; for his views of the subject were most materially different when, in 1811, he voted against the resolutions brought forward by Mr Horner, as the chairman of the Bullion Committee. Having gone into the inquiry, determined to dismiss all former impressions that he might have received, and to obliterate from his memory the vote that he had given some years since when the same question was discussed, he had resolved to apply to it his undivided and unprejudiced attention, and adopt every inference that authentic information or mature reflection should offer to his mind; nor had he any hesitation in stating that, although he should probably now vote, if it were again brought before the House, in opposition to the practical measure then recommended, he now, with very little modification, concurred in the principles laid down in the first fourteen resolutions submitted to the House by that very able and much lamented individual. He conceived them to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system. * * * * *

After this preface, he had now to proceed to the question with regard to which the House was called on to decide—viz. whether it was advisable that the bank should at the earliest possible period resume its payments in cash. After the repeated declarations of parliament that the bank should at the earliest possible period resume cash payments, he had hoped that the only points necessary for them to proceed on, that night, would be, first, to fix the period when the restriction should cease; and, next, to adopt the means most feasible for carrying this their intention into effect. But it was impossible for him to conceal from himself that new and extraordinary opinions had been promulgated, which, were the House prepared to act upon them, must inevitably lead to an indefinite suspension of cash-payments. When he recollected that the necessity for a resumption of such payments was recognised in the pre-

ambles of different acts of parliament,—when he knew that no one objection was formerly made to the principle of doing so, he must own that he was not precisely prepared to hear that a principle the very reverse would be contended for. But judging from certain publications, by which he feared the public mind was much influenced, it did appear that the return to cash-payments was received in some quarters with alarm; and he was driven to come to this conclusion, that if weight and authority were given to the principles and sentiments contained in these works, the House must be prepared to legislate for an indefinite suspension. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary in the outset that parliament should make up its mind on this point—whether a metallic standard of value should or should not be resorted to. On this account it was that, in the second resolution, he had called upon the House to affirm the necessity of an adoption of a metallic standard of value. The House (he repeated) must now make up its mind upon the question whether the old metallic standard should be restored or not. After an experience of twenty-two years, it was, in his mind, impossible that any considerate man should hesitate upon this question, or upon the expediency of a return to the ancient system of fixing upon *some* standard of value. Upon the necessity of establishing some such standard he could appeal to the opinion of all writers upon political economy, and to the practice of every civilized country as well as to that of our own antecedent to the year 1797. All the witnesses, indeed, examined before the committee strongly recommended the establishment of this standard, one alone excepted (Mr Smith, a very respectable man), who was an advocate for the indefinite suspension of cash-payments. But when this witness was asked whether the indefinite suspension of cash-payments was to exist without any standard of value, he replied, 'No. The pound should be the standard.' He was required to define what he meant by 'the pound.' His answer was, 'I find it difficult to explain it; but every gentleman in England knows

it.' The committee repeated their question; and Mr Smith answered—'It is something that has existed in this country without variation for eight hundred years, three hundred years before the introduction of gold.' And this was the only definition he could give. * * * * * Sir Isaac Newton, retiring from the sublime studies in which he chiefly passed his life—from the contemplation of the heavenly bodies, and from an investigation of the laws by which these motions were guided—entered upon the examination of this subject. But that great man came, at last, back to the old—the vulgar—doctrine, as some called it—that the true standard of value consisted in a definite quantity of gold bullion. Every sound writer on the subject came to the same conclusion, that a certain weight of gold bullion with an impression on it denoting it to be of that certain weight, and of a certain fineness, constituted the only true, intelligible, and adequate standard of value; and to that standard the country must return, or the difficulties of our position would be aggravated as we proceeded."

In reply to those who contended that, as long as the bank was solvent, and as long as discounts were demanded for legitimate mercantile operations, there could not be any such thing as depreciation, Mr Peel made use of the following arguments:—

"If solvency alone were a sufficient proof that there was no excess of circulation, then the theory of Mr Law (author of the Mississippi bubble) was just; and the lands as well as the funds might be safely converted into a circulating medium. But there was, in fact, no test of excess or deficiency, but a comparison with the price of gold. This was not indicated by theory alone; the last few years had afforded abundant experience to confirm it. The circumstances that had taken place since the year 1816 were such as to fill every man who

carefully considered them with a desire to put an end to the present system. In 1815, commerce was in full activity. A great impulse had been given; speculation was at its height, and the exports beyond example. But in 1816 and 1817 came the natural result of these overstrained hopes and exertions. Languor proportionate to the degree of excitation followed. An immense accumulation of goods had taken place, for which there was no demand. Prices fell. The country banks, alarmed, stopped their issues; and thousands in a moment were stricken to the ground by a blow which they could not foresee, and against which it was impossible to provide. * The amount of Bank of England notes in circulation, previous to 1814, was about £23,000,000. In 1816 it was £26,000,000; and at the end

* The Bank of England notes in circulation at the following periods are now known to be exactly thus.—Without the operations of the country banks, they will not account for the distress and pressure of 1817 and 1818.

30th June 1813.	
Above £5, . .	£16,138,590
Under £5, . .	7,807,600
	£23,946,190
30th June 1814.	
Above £5, . .	£17,237,670
Under £5, . .	8,626,600
	£25,864,270
30th June 1815.	
Above £5, . .	£17,936,610
Under £5, . .	9,076,830
	£27,013,440
30th June 1816.	
Above £5, . .	£17,311,280
Under £5, . .	9,051,960
	£26,363,240
30th June 1817.	
Above £5, . .	£19,645,180
Under £5, . .	7,896,020
	£27,541,200
30th June 1818.	
Above £5, . .	£20,113,410
Under £5, . .	7,379,930
	£27,493,340

The striking feature of the above is the decrease of notes under £5 after the panic of 1816. The "large issue of gold," of which Mr Peel speaks, never circulated, but was in a short time either sent to the Continent, or melted into bullion and sold.

of 1817, £29,000,000, together with a large issue of gold. At that period trade revived, and importations were made from all parts of the world. Many were deceived by a nominal profit, which in truth resolved itself into an excess of currency, and the same scenes of distress and embarrassment were soon renewed. * * * * *

They had the evidence of Mr Gladstone, who stated that the value of grain and provisions imported into Liverpool from Ireland in 1817 was £1,200,000, and in the last year £1,950,000. He added that, in the year 1816, 270,000 bales of cotton were imported into the same place; in 1817 were brought 350,000 bales; and in 1818 (last year) 457,000 bales! The consequence of this excess above demand was a fall in the price of cotton of not less than *forty per cent.* The same gentleman declared that, in 1818, there were in Liverpool goods to the amount of £3,000,000 in value above what was deposited there in the preceding year. To no one was all this over-speculation of any advantage; but as respected the labouring classes it was attended with incalculable mischief. The unequal and fluctuating demands for labour deranged all the relations of humble life. At one period wages were too high; at another, there was no employment. The rapidity with which these changes followed each other sometimes defeated all private arrangements; discouraged the accumulation of steady savings; and frequently overwhelmed the labourer in want and misery. He felt bound to speak out, and to speak boldly and decisively upon this subject; for it was utterly impossible to listen to the descriptions recently given by the honourable members for Coventry and Carlisle of what the situation of the industrious poor was in various parts of the country, and not suspect that—whatever might be the returns from the customhouse—there was some unsoundness in the existing system. It was idle, quite idle, whilst such distress existed, to talk about "national prosperity!" The amount of the poor-rate alone was sufficient to negative any such state-

ment. That the excess of commercial speculation which led to such evils was the consequence of an over-issue of paper-currency, was a fact not to be disputed. A check upon that issue was the only cure that could be applied; and it must be applied by the establishment of a metallic standard of value: for the issue of paper money had not, like the wise dispositions of Providence or the prudent regulations of man, any counteracting principle within itself. It went on just as long as the excitation lasted, but was sure, in its collapse, to scatter distress and ruin. Private bankers, at first anxious to accommodate, no sooner perceived a system of declining credit, than, in the eagerness to provide for their own security, they refused all further aid, and increased the want of public confidence." * *

Mr Peel then enlarged upon the great and undoubted mischief caused by the hesitation to come to some settlement of this vital and momentous matter, which had been evinced ever since the close of hostilities in 1815.

"It would answer (he continued) no good purpose to promise a resumption of cash-payments without fixing upon some definite period; for such a promise had been made no less than *five times*, and had every time proved delusive! The country, then, to be satisfied, must clearly see that a serious resolution upon this subject now existed. Some decisive measure must now be adopted. The events of the last few days, with respect to the public funds, evinced the absolute necessity for decision. *Four* alternatives had presented themselves for the consideration of the committee. The first was to recommend the postponement of the resumption till after July next, accompanied by a legislative declaration as to some future definite period. But, if they had been content to adopt that proceeding, he put it to the House whether they would have appeared to the country to be really in earnest. That which *had* appeared since the report of the committee, clearly proved

they would not. In short, it was necessary for them to 'screw their courage to the sticking-place,' to convince the world that they had seriously set about the work! On *five different occasions*, he must repeat, parliament had declared that cash-payments ought to be resumed, and as soon as possible; and the public now doubted the sincerity of all these declarations. A few nights ago, his friend the Chancellor of Exchequer was taunted on account of the resolutions proposed by him in 1811. But in these very resolutions, it was distinctly affirmed that, though it was not then convenient to proceed to cash-payments, yet they ought to be resorted to as speedily as possible. Those who voted for the resolutions decidedly recognised this principle. In the years 1814, 1815, and 1816, the restoration of cash-payments was regularly postponed:—and now, in 1819, it was proposed to continue restriction, in a modified form, until the year 1821. Hence it was necessary to do something more than merely re-state their opinion that cash-payments ought to be resumed. Another alternative—which he was ready to admit when he was at first inclined to favour—was, that the legislature should fix merely a definite period, and make some declaration of principle that might be an instruction to the bank. But, on consideration, it was evident that this must still leave it to the bank to act upon that declaration of principle as it saw fit; and if they (the directors) controverted the principle—as they had done—it was not likely that their observance of it would be very strict. * * * * *

The bank, in fact, *had* deliberated upon all those questions; and in their answer was to be found the following passage:—

"'That this court cannot refrain from adverting to an opinion, strongly insisted on by some, that the bank has only to reduce its issues to obtain a favourable turn in the exchanges and a consequent influx of the precious metals. The court conceives it to be its duty to declare that it is unable to discover any solid foundation for such a sentiment.'

"He (Mr Peel) believed this was the conscientious feeling

of the bank, and he mentioned the circumstance only to show the impolicy of asking a body to act upon a principle which they thought untenable. The third alternative was, to prescribe such a limitation of the issues of the bank as would secure the power of the bank over the foreign exchanges. He for one confessed, however, that this always appeared to him to be a very unwise position—and for this reason, because it depended so much upon circumstances when to say that there was an excess or not of circulation. There were occasions when what was called a run on the bank might be arrested in its injurious effects by an increase of the issues. There were other occasions when such a state of things demanded a curtailment. * * * * The quantity of circulation, which was demanded in a time of confidence, varied so materially from the amount which a period of despondency required, that the House must feel the absolute impossibility of fixing any circumscribed amount. It was not possible to advert to the evidence taken before the committees without being impressed with that conviction. The fourth alternative that remained to the committee was that which had been adopted, and which was disclosed in the resolutions that he had the honour to place upon the table of the House. It proceeded on the plain principle that the bank should regulate its issues by gold—the same principle (be it recollected) on which the Bank of England had uniformly acted previously to the restrictions of 1797."

After various observations on the requirement by the bank directors of the repayment of ten millions owing by government previous to the removal of the existing restrictions,—an amount of demand for which Mr Peel said very plainly he was "not by any means prepared,"—he continued his argument to show the policy of recurring to the standard of £3, 17s. 10½d. for the ounce of gold.

"It was said by those (continued Mr Peel) who disapproved of the plan proposed, that the bank must contract their issues if compelled to regulate them by the price of gold. If that argument had any force, it went perhaps farther than its advocates wished. It was an argument against cash-payments at all; for if it could be considered an argument against a regulation by the mint price of £3, 17s. 10½d., it was equally an argument against a regulation by the market price of £4, 1s. per ounce. The mere obligation of the bank to attend to this regulation of their issues, when the payment of their notes was to be made in bars or ingots, made no difference. Let the House recollect what the bank was able to do when compelled to pay in specie. From 1774 to 1797, they did that to which now objection was made. During that period they conformed their issues to the price of gold; and he would challenge any man to produce, during that period, an instance of the price of gold exceeding £3, 17s. 6d.' Thus, as long as the bank conformed to the practice of thus regulating issues, there was no difficulty, and the price of gold never increased. At that period, the holder of bank-notes, say to the amount of £250, had a right to demand of the bank five pounds, or sixty ounces troy, of gold bullion, impressed with a stamp. Each pound-weight of gold the mint was enjoined by its indentures to divide and coin into 44½ guineas. Notwithstanding the prohibitory laws, everybody knew gold was sent out of the kingdom, whenever there occurred such a variation in its price as to afford a temptation to the capitalist or speculator; and it was next said that the price of gold had varied considerably since the period of restriction; that it rose from the mint price as high as £5, 2s. the ounce, and that therefore it was a standard which, from its variations, could not be depended on. That argument was a fallacy. We did not, during the period of restriction, want gold. We had another substitute; and gold, it must be recollected, was to be considered in relation to that substitute. Let not the House be led away to

mistake price for value. When people talked of gold rising, were they prepared to prove that it had risen in intrinsic value? Let them not talk of its price in paper. Let them compare it with any commodity of a real and fixed value. Did a given quantity of gold at present command more corn or more silver than it would have done fifty years ago? When he named corn, he knew, of course, that this article was subject to the fluctuation of the seasons; but setting apart that consideration, he repeated that gold did not, within the period alluded to, show an increased value by commanding more of any fixed commodity than in former times. Nay, it commanded less than it formerly did; and on this account, because they had in use also a substitute, and because they therefore had a greater stock of the metal; and hence its value was really less here than fifty years before. * * * * There was another objection that, on a first view, seemed extremely plausible. It was, that a great increase of revenue made a correspondent increase of the circulating medium necessary. That, however plausible, was not a just inference. He would show an instance in our history where the increase of circulation, compared with the revenue, had varied in an *inverse ratio!* He took the two periods 1792 and 1809. He took the latter year, because it was a time when there was no complaint of a deficiency of the circulating medium; it was, indeed, the year before the appointment of the Bullion Committee, when there prevailed an opinion—whether right or wrong—that there was an excess of it. If, then, there was any truth in the argument that the circulating medium must increase with the trade, taxation, and revenue, it should have varied directly in that year. The fact was, however, it varied *inversely.* According to the statement of the late Lord Liverpool, the amount of gold in this country, in the year 1792, was about *thirty millions.* Taking it, however, at five millions less, it, with the *eleven millions* of bank-notes, gave a circulating medium of *thirty-six millions.* At that period, the interest

of the debt was £9,000,000; the vessels employed in commercial concerns, 10,000; the official value of the exports was computed at £19,000,000. In 1809, the interest of the debt was £31,000,000; the commercial shipping threefold; and the official value of the exports had risen one-half. According, then, to the theory of a correspondent increase of the circulating medium with the trade, revenue, and debt, there ought to have been a considerable increase in 1809 over 1792; but the truth was, that this material augmentation in all branches was provided for by a circulating medium of *nineteen millions!*"

On the proposal of those theorists who would have ascertained, as nearly as possible, what the depreciation of the paper money of the war really was, and then issued a coinage depreciated down to that standard, so as to preserve inviolate the enormous mass of outstanding money engagements, public and private, contracted in that currency, Mr Peel remarks:—

"Amongst other and various propositions which had been advanced on the subject, was one which at first appeared very plausible, and which was made by those who admitted the advantage of reverting to a metallic standard of value. The argument they used was, that a variable standard exposed the country to great danger, but at the same time, as we had now been twenty-two years without a metallic circulation, it would be exceedingly difficult and hazardous to revert to the ancient system. These persons maintained that we ought to regulate the value of gold by the market price; and their plan amounted to neither more nor less than this—we ought to extricate ourselves from our present difficulties by depreciating the precious metals. They proposed that the bank should regulate the payment of its notes, not by a fixed standard, but by the price of gold, whatever it might be. In other words, in place of the ancient system of the country, by which paper was kept on a

par with gold, they would reduce gold to a par with paper! This was a proposition which could be viewed in no other light than as a fraud on the public creditor. It was in vain to think that such a course would lessen the difficulties of the question. It was in vain to think that foreign nations could be imposed upon by such a deception, or that in their dealings with us they would not calculate upon depreciation. The result could only be that, after having incurred the imputation of a fraud on the public creditor, the coin would be debased. It was therefore most desirable to revert to the ancient standard of the realm. He felt himself bound to caution the House against all arguments in support of a course which, though fraudulent, would not accomplish its own objects, but aggravate present difficulties. " Let the House be assured that every deviation from the ancient practice would hereafter, on the least appearance of embarrassment, be quoted as a precedent for a more extended departure from it. = When future suspensions of cash-payments were sought, the advocates of such a course would refer to the conduct of their ancestors,—they would call for the adoption of the same principle,—and would conclude, because the price of gold had still further risen in its relation to paper, that the principle must, by analogy, be extended. Such would be the inevitable effects of adopting the proposition to which he had adverted. The restoration of the value of our currency was always a striking feature in the country's history. * * * There were, however, three distinct periods to which he should call the attention of the House, when government, not misled by the arguments of those who would continue abuse, effected the reformation of the coin. That reformation was accomplished in the reigns of Edward I., Queen Elizabeth, and William III., all periods that they must contemplate with pride and with satisfaction."

After some further remarks, in the course of which he compared those theorists who pretended to have

an idea of an "abstract pound," distinct from any given quantity of valuable metal, or any other unchanging commodity, to "Crambe," in "Martinus Scriblerus," who professed to form "an abstract idea of a Lord Mayor, divested of all his attributes of office, coach, wig, gold chain," &c. &c., Mr Peel moved a series of resolutions embodying the recommendations of the secret committee of a gradual return to cash-payments.

That this address is a wonderful display of the astuteness of the practised advocate and of the art of the rhetorician, cannot be denied; and it is easy to see that it must have produced a prodigious effect upon an audience who, with a very few exceptions, must have taken the greater part of its conclusions upon trust. It is, after a calm consideration of the entire speech, however, equally undeniable that it studiously and dexterously evades the really important point of the great question at issue. To come to a right decision upon a matter affecting the welfare of the whole kingdom, from the highest to the lowest (for of an error here no one could escape the consequences), it was first necessary to have arrived at some real knowledge of the actual extent of depreciation to which the current money of the kingdom had come, after twenty-two years of unchecked issues of inconvertible paper, in which at last the directors of the Bank of England only had their share, in company with 900 country bankers of greater or less credit and influence in their respective localities. This inquiry, however, neither the secret committee nor the mover of the resolutions carried out;

and the consequence was, that the house really legislated in the dark, taking the blind guidance of mere unproved statements or assertions made by individuals.

Nothing, in fact, can be more wild than some of the statements embodied in the reports of the committees, or referred to by Mr Peel in moving the resolutions; and one statement in particular, hazarded by Mr Peel, is of a nature so extraordinary as to demand a more special notice. In order to refute the reasonings of those who asserted, not without some justice, that enormous extension of taxation must necessarily involve an extended amount of circulating money, he referred to a statement by the first Lord Liverpool, that in 1792 the quantity of gold coin in circulation was thirty-six millions, to support (together with the bank-notes then issued) a taxation of eighteen millions; whereas in 1809, argued Mr Peel, when the interest of the debt alone was thirty-one millions, all this increased taxation was supported by a bank circulation of nineteen millions. For this extraordinary fact, as he called it, he tried to account by a hypothesis of a more rapid circulation of the existing money. Where Lord Liverpool got his data for asserting that the gold currency of 1792 alone amounted to thirty millions, it is impossible to say; but if that were any approximation to the truth, who now can believe with Mr Peel that nineteen millions only carried on the taxation and extensive transactions of 1809? The fact seems to be that Mr Peel, in his eagerness to refute views that bore awkwardly upon the theories of the Economists, entirely overlooked

the material consideration that, betwixt 1792 and 1809, the country banks had swelled their numbers from about two hundred to *seven hundred and forty;* which, supposing their average circulation at the low sum of £30,000 each, gives an addition of twenty-two millions to the nineteen millions of the bank. The same eagerness also probably caused Mr Peel totally to overlook another fact very material to a right conclusion as to this matter, that is to say, the great increase in 1809 of bills of exchange for small sums, which, passing through many hands, acted to some extent as a current money. It may be true that political economy has never yet been able to lay down any rule as to what precise addition to a currency augmented taxation involves; but where the circulation of such country is *real*, that is to say, convertible into gold and silver on demand, it is easy to see that there is a distinct limitation to all such additions, and that is, that they must be such as barely to enable taxes to be paid without depreciating the currency of the country in question below the level of the money of the world. This it is easy to conclude; because upon this supposition it is obvious any excess would speedily cure itself, upon the known principles of all circulating money.

There is also another portion of this celebrated speech which is equally open to objection. In alluding to the plans of those who, opposed to an inconvertible and varying paper, yet wished to assimilate the value of the coinage to the depreciated standard which the banks by their over-issues had created, and

to alloy the gold pound down to that level, Mr Peel stigmatized the proposal as a fraud upon the public creditor. The justice of this accusation it is difficult to perceive. To allow men to lend money to their country in a depreciated currency, and then to compel the people to repay such loans in money of a higher value, may perhaps be styled, not without justice, a fraud on that public; but how can the repayment of money lent in a currency of the same value as that in which it was lent be a fraud upon the lender? Such are the deficiencies to be detected in a speech otherwise remarkable for consummate ability, and not less so for the consequences, yet only partly developed, which it was fated to help to produce.

The debate which followed the powerful address of Mr Peel does not, considering the immense importance of the measure proposed, contain much that is worthy of notice, save in one instance. The great majority of the House had evidently made up their minds that the measures of the Economist party should be carried, and without material alteration. Enough, however, was disclosed, during the debate, to prove that the ultimate unanimity with which the resolutions seemed to be carried was apparent only; and that many individual members entertained strong misgivings as to the result of such a return to payments in cash, although they were not numerous enough to render a division desirable. The same remarkable feature, however, which characterized the reports of the committees and the opening address of Mr Peel, was apparent also in the addresses of those who fol-

lowed him. There was in the whole an absence of any and of all attempts to prove the precise rate of depreciation at which the currency of the war had arrived; and this was so remarkable that it may be said of them, as was said by Tacitus of the statues of Brutus and Cassius, "Maximè effulgebant eo ipsô quòd non videbantur!"

Although it was evident that the House was by no means unanimous on the subject, yet as the ministers as well as the landlords were silent listeners to the debate, the resolutions of Mr Peel were feebly opposed. The speech of Mr Alderman Heygate against the measures of the Economists was destroyed in its effect by the absurdity of some of its positions. Who would be guided by a speaker who, in the same breath, denied that the paper currency had either been over-issued or depreciated, and then asserted that to render it convertible into gold would enormously increase the weight of all money engagements, public and private? The speech of Mr Gurney, who came to the same conclusion with Mr Alderman Heygate, was judicious and sensible, but not such as to produce any effect after the splendid effort of the mover of the resolutions, and the terse speaking of Mr Tierney, who strongly supported the resolutions as they stood.

After Mr Peel's, the only other really remarkable speech was that of Mr Ricardo, now member for Portarlington, which was truly extraordinary, from the flippant and off-hand manner in which it disposed of a question than which none more important to the country could come before a House of Commons.

After some observations on the proceedings of the directors of the Bank of England, Mr Ricardo proceeded thus:—

"He did not think this a question only between the bank and the ministers, as had been argued by his right honourable friend (Mr Tierney), but rather one betwixt ministers and the bank on one side and the country on the other. He was therefore disposed to concur with his right honourable friend in any measure which might be contrived to keep the ministers under control. One principle was clear—of the utmost importance in the consideration of this subject—it was this, that those who had the power of regulating the *quantity* of the circulating medium of the country had the power, not only of regulating the rate of the exchanges, but the price of every commodity. This power clearly resided in the hands of the directors of the bank, and it was a most formidable one. It quite astonished him that Mr Harman could imagine that it was in the power of an individual to influence the exchanges against the wish of the bank; which was just as reasonable as to suppose that an individual could regulate the price of corn or any other article of general consumption. The question before the House was one of immense importance in principle; but in the manner of bringing about was trivial, and not deserving half an hour's consideration of the House. The difficulty was only that of raising the currency *three per cent.* in value (hear, hear.) And who could doubt that, even in those states in which the currency was entirely metallic, it often suffered a variation equal to this without inconvenience to the public (hear, hear)? In this country we had nothing but paper in circulation, and therefore every variation in the value of our currency was shown by the price of gold; but where metal alone circulated, it could not be doubted that gold might, from various circumstances, become more or less valuable, and thus affect all contracts; though from there being no other standard

to measure it by, its variations were much less palpable. His particular reason for supporting the measure under consideration was this,—by withdrawing paper so as to restore the note to its bullion value—an alteration, by the by, of only *three per cent.*—the House would have done all that was required (hear, hear, hear.) If the House adopted the proposed amendment of the honourable gentleman (Mr Ellice, who proposed to shorten the time allowed the bank), another variation in the currency would take place which it was his wish to guard against. If that amendment were agreed to, an extraordinary demand for gold would take place for the purpose of coinage, and this might enhance the value of the currency three or four per cent. in addition to its first enhancement (hear, hear, hear.) As to the plan before the House, it was that which the bank directors, if they were wise, would wish (hear, hear.) They should wish to fill the circulation with paper, and as long as they had the privilege of giving gold in bullion for their notes, there would be no coin in circulation,—they would have the monopoly. They had no real interest in depreciating the currency; it would be rather their interest to raise it, even to double the value. They were in the situation of creditors, not of debtors; their whole capital being in money, or in securities representing money."

After some observations on the proposed repayment of ten millions by government to the bank, which he said was an affair solely between the directors and the Treasury, and ought not to be noticed in the resolutions of the House, Mr Ricardo thus continued:—

"The proposed mode of resuming cash-payments seemed to him the easiest that could be imagined. The bank would be placed under no restraint at first, nor under any sudden necessity for reducing its issues. * * * * Till October 1820, the bank need make no reduction, and then a slight one

only (hear, hear). He had no doubt, if they were cautious, they might arrive at cash-payments without giving out one guinea in gold. They should reduce their issues cautiously: his fear was they would do it too rapidly (hear). If he might advise, he should recommend them not to buy bullion; but, even if they had but a few millions, and *he* had the management of their concern, he should boldly sell. Every sale would improve the exchanges; and till gold fell to £3, 17s. 6d. there would be no need to make purchases. He was only sorry that the bank was not obliged by the resolutions to buy all the bullion offered at £3, 17s. 6d., lest through over-caution they should starve the circulation.

* * * * * *

"With the exception of this omission, the plan was, in his opinion, perfectly safe and gentle. With regard to what had fallen from his right honourable friend (Mr Tierney) as to the graduated scale of payments not having been submitted to the directors, he referred them to the examination of Mr Thornton before the Lords' Committee, where he would see that gentleman's evidence was wholly in favour of the plan. He (Mr Ricardo) for his part, was quite astonished that such alarm prevailed at a reduction of perhaps one million in four years. He could only ascribe it to the indiscreet language of the bank (hear, hear, hear). The honourable director had, that night, told them not to withdraw confidence from the bank. The House did not withdraw confidence from the bank from any doubt of its wealth, or of its integrity, but from a conviction of its total ignorance of the principles of political economy (hear, hear, and a laugh)."

After some further observations on the conduct of the bank directors, and in defence of the plan of bullion-payments for a time, Mr Ricardo continued as follows:—

"It had been said, on the part of the bank, that they were

'quite ready to pay, if repaid their advances made to government.' But how came they to make such advances to government, if not assured of repayment in a certain time? They had not been forced to make any such advances; but then bank directors had such an extraordinary disposition to act as ministers (a laugh, and hear, hear, hear). It would be better if they would attend to their own interests and those of their constituents. Unquestionably a most fearful and most destructive depreciation had, at one time, taken place. But from that we had recovered; and he was happy to reflect that we had so far retraced our steps. We had nearly got home; and he hoped that his right honourable friend would lend them his assistance to enable them to reach it safely. He would venture to state that, in a very few weeks, all alarm would be forgotten; and at the end of the year we should all be surprised to reflect that any alarm at all had ever prevailed at the prospect of a variation of *three per centum* in the value of the circulating medium."

After a few remarks on the regulation of the silver coinage, and the inutility and inconveniences of a double standard, as some proposed, the honourable gentleman sat down "amidst loud and general cheering from all parts of the house."

This speech, which candour must admit to be flippant beyond the occasion, exhibits the same characteristic omission as that exhibited by the otherwise masterly address of Mr Peel. Admitting that, at one time, the depreciation of the paper currency had reached "a fearful and destructive" point (which was, no doubt, the case throughout the last dozen years of the war), the speaker makes no attempt to calculate the duration or extent of that depreciation, but felicitates

himself upon the country having "recovered from it." This is a mode of dealing with such a matter surely passing strange. How had the country "recovered?" Mr Ricardo was aware that, throughout the eighteen years from 1797 up to 1816 nearly, a depreciation, at last fearfully rapid, of the entire current money of the kingdom went on. In this depreciated money he must have known that all the engagements of the country, both public and private, which took date during that period were contracted, of which a large mass was still outstanding. This was particularly the case with the public debt, of which by far the greater part was lent in this depreciated money—that is to say, five hundred millions; whilst by the operation of the sinking fund, the old stock, which had been lent in money of standard value, was bought up, and new stock bought with the same depreciated money, created and substituted. In addition to this, the salaries of all public officers, from the king downwards, had been augmented to meet this depreciation, and the pay of the army and navy had been augmented for the same reason; whilst all private mortgages, settlements, jointures, bonds, and money-instruments of every kind, contracted during the same time and still outstanding, were contracted in the same depreciated money. All this enormous mass of debt had been, by the preparations of the bank for the resumption of cash-payments, augmented to the exact degree in which the value of the current money was increased by the withdrawal of the paper. This augmentation of the weight of all

debts whatsoever, in company with a decrease of the means of meeting them, had been attended by both agricultural and commercial distress, so severe that the country rang with complaints, and the utmost agitation existed. All this, and the cause of all this, still continued without any real diminution, let the power of the country to struggle under them be what it might; and yet this state of things, which had forced the price of gold down from nearly six pounds to four pounds the ounce, is called by Mr Ricardo a "recovery from depreciation," to complete which the addition of "*three per cent.*" more of injustice was only needed.

The manner and spirit with which this certainly extraordinary effusion was received by the great majority of the House, more especially those portions of it which made light of the entire matter, and dwelt upon the case of a variation of only "three per cent.," and its being "not worth half an hour's consideration by the House," made it evident that the resolutions of the committee would be passed by that majority without modification, and the debate became comparatively uninteresting. If the House had felt hesitation before, the confident tone of the member for Portarlington, who was looked upon as the great authority upon these subjects, had successfully removed it, whilst the country-party abstained from taking any part in the debate, being content with the supposed panoply of the corn-bill. After the few members, therefore, who like Mr Gurney had the moral courage to express their doubts, had spoken, the subject was exhausted; and the amendments, pro-

posed by Mr Ellice and others, having been with the leave of the House withdrawn, the resolutions as they stood were passed unanimously, without a division, amidst loud cheers from all parts of the House.* In fact, so singularly prolonged were these manifestations of delight, as well as the applauses given to the address of Mr Ricardo, that it seems difficult to account for so much exultation without referring to the prognostications as to the result which had been indulged in by more than one eminent public writer on political subjects, and adopted with equal confidence by a party, not large certainly, but adorned by much talent, who, from first to last, had deprecated either the step itself or else the mode and manner of taking it.

The bill itself, of which these resolutions formed the basis, was passed soon after, and became law before the conclusion of the session, when it became one of the most prominent topics of the address of the speaker of the House of Commons to the Prince Regent on the prorogation of parliament.† That by

* This unanimity was however only apparent. Mr Gurney, Sir Robert Peel, and some other members, were only induced by the general wish and feeling of the House to acquiesce without dividing; and Mr Matthias Attwood, it was said, left the House rather than even appear to acquiesce in the measures proposed. It has also been asserted that Sir Robert Peel, on the cash-payments bill passing shortly after in July, was heard to say, with great bitterness, "Robert (his son) has *doubled* his fortune, but *ruined* his country!" That old Sir Robert Peel was from first to last an opponent of the measure, is quite certain.

† The substance of this celebrated act (59 Geo. III. c. 49) is as follows: Clause I., which contains the preamble, merely recites the various

the augmentation of the value of the current money caused by this act, it in effect doubled, or nearly

acts from time to time passed by the legislature to restrain the Bank of England from paying in cash,—to wit, two acts in the 37th year of George III.; one act in the 38th year of George III., to amend the former; one act in the 42d year of George III.; one act in the 43d year of George III.; one act in the 44th year of George III.; four acts in the 54th, 55th, 56th, and 58th year of George III.; and lastly, an act made in the same session of parliament; the clause then going on to continue the restrictions in force until the *1st day of May* 1823, when they are finally to cease and determine.

Clause II. provides, that after the 1st of February 1820, and before the 1st of October 1820, any person tendering to the Bank of England notes to the value of sixty ounces of mint gold, may demand payment in gold to that amount of standard fineness, at the rate of £4, 1s. per ounce.

Clause III. provides, that on and after the 1st October 1820, and before the 1st May 1821, any person tendering notes as aforesaid, may demand of the bank payment in mint gold as aforesaid, at the rate of £3, 19s. 6d. per ounce, the same to be paid in gold equal in fineness to lawful coin of the realm only.

Clause IV. provides, that on and after the 1st May 1821, and before the 1st May 1823, any person tendering notes to the value of sixty ounces of mint gold as aforesaid, may demand payment of the bank in gold, equal in fineness to lawful coin of the realm, at the rate of £3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce.

Clause V. provides, that between the 1st of February 1820, and the 1st of October 1820, the Bank of England may make payment, as before described, at any rate less than £4, 1s., and not less than £3, 19s. 6d. *per ounce*, on giving notice three days before in the *London Gazette* of such intention; and that between the 1st October 1820, and the 1st May 1821, the bank may make payment, as before described, at any rate less than £3, 19s. 6d. *per ounce*, but not less than £3, 17s. 10½d. *per ounce*, the bank giving the same notice in the *London Gazette;* but that, after giving such notice, the bank shall not be allowed to make payment in gold at any higher rate.

doubled, the weight of all money engagements, public and private, then outstanding, there are few now

Clause VI. provides, that the bank cannot be required to make the payments afore-mentioned except in bars or ingots of 60 ounces each stamped, to be of standard fineness, the same as the coin of the realm.

Clause VII. empowers the bank to pay any fraction less than forty shillings of any sum so demanded, above the value of sixty ounces, in the lawful silver coin of the realm.

Clause VIII. provides that the bank may, if it see fit, pay or exchange the lawful coin of the realm for its notes, at any time after the 1st of May 1822, notwithstanding any provisions of this act to the contrary.

Clause IX. compels the bank to deliver to government, in every week after the passing of such act, until the 1st May 1823, an account of its notes and bills in circulation, distinguishing the denominations and values of such notes and bills, and giving the average amount of each; and also to give in to government quarterly accounts in the same manner, and also publish such accounts in the *London Gazette* at the end of each quarter.

Clause X. repeals all former laws against the exporting or melting the coin of the realm, and enacts the lawfulness of both.

Clause XI. In order to remove all doubts as to the future legality of exporting or melting coin, repeals various acts, and parts of acts, of Edward III., Richard II., Henry IV., Henry VI., Henry VII., and Charles II., relative to the melting of the coinage and carrying it out of the kingdom.

Clause XII. repeals that portion of the act of 6th and 7th of William III., which requires from persons exporting bullion an oath that such bullion was not the product of molten coin of the realm, nor plate wrought within the kingdom; and also, that portion of it which subjects any one, not being a trading goldsmith or refiner of silver, who sells gold or silver bullion to six months imprisonment; and also, so much of it as empowers justices, wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company, and others, to seize unlawful bullion, and force the owner to prove on oath that it had not been current coin; and also,

to deny; that the act was suffered to pass without any member of either house of parliament distinctly asserting the truth and at the same time deprecating the injustice, is equally unquestionable. That the country is still struggling under the effects of this the most unjust of all acts of parliament passed in modern times, admits of just as little doubt. It would be however just as far from equitable to impute, as some have attempted to do, the whole of these errors and their consequences to Mr Peel, because his name is wedded, by usage, to an act which he was merely selected by the Economist party to carry through the House.

In 1819, Mr Peel was only thirty-one years of age, and had for some years occupied the harassing post of Secretary of State for Ireland. At thirty-one years of age, few men indeed, even at the present day, when the science is better understood, know anything of political economy, or even that more lucid portion of it which treats of the laws of circu-

such portions of the act of William III., entitled, "An act to encourage the bringing of plate to the Mint to be coined, and for remedying the ill state of the coin of the kingdom," as required the taking of an oath on the exportation of bullion that the same was not molten coin or plate wrought in England, and which inflicted a penalty on shipmasters exporting unlawful bullion.

Clause XIII. provides, that nothing shall in this act be construed to interfere with the laws against clipping, washing, rounding, filing, diminishing, or otherwise impairing the coin of the realm; and further provides, that instead of the former oath as enacted by the 6th and 7th William III., an oath shall now be required from the exporters of bullion, proving, by one credible witness, that no part of the said bullion was clippings of the coin of the realm, leaving all the existing law as to clipping as it was before the passing of this act.

lating money. It is not in fact a part of knowledge which young men, whatever may be their leisure, their talents, and their acquirements, are naturally inclined to study; and this, in all human probability, was the case with Mr Peel. He had acquired from the publications then in vogue, and from the reports of the committees, a smattering of that which passed for profound knowledge without being so; nor ought he to be reproached, more than any other member of either House of Parliament which passed the bill of 1819, with errors, mistakes, and shortcomings, of which even a man like Mr Ricardo was guilty, and which were adopted by the entire legislature with hardly an exception in either House; Earl Grey, in the Upper, and Mr Gurney in the Lower House, being the only individuals who distinctly recorded their want of belief in the well-working of the act. Such is the history of the most important measure of the session of 1819, in which Mr Peel took the prominent part. This memorable year was not, however, destitute of other incidents of deep interest in which he also had some share.

It has been already stated generally, that, throughout the years 1816, 1817, and 1818, much and extensive distress and consequent excitement pervaded the country. Of this pressure and consequent exasperation amongst the people, who found a state of peace, to their surprise, much harder to be borne than a state of war, the causes were many. Amongst these may be pointed out the sudden cessation of a large portion of the government expenditure, and also the

cessation of that monoply of the supply of colonial produce and manufactured articles to the continent of Europe which the war had given. The main cause was however the decline in the prices of all commodities, agricultural and commercial, necessarily occasioned by the sudden diminution of the paper circulation, which the prospect of an impending restoration of cash-payments had as necessarily brought about.

Out of the discontent amongst the industrious classes, caused by this unexpected state of affairs, naturally sprung a resuscitation of that question of representative reform which had been revived,* as far back as the period of the American Revolution, by the Duke of Richmond and advocated to some extent by the younger Pitt; which had been adopted by Mr Horne Tooke, Major Cartwright, Sir Charles Wolseley, Sir Francis Burdett, and others; and more recently advocated by the powerful pen of Mr Cobbett in his widely circulated Political Register. By the agitation of this question, and the alarm thus caused to Lord Liverpool and his cabinet, were originated that series of acts of parliament then and since designated as "the six acts," which put into the hands of the minister for the time being a power not less despotic than that of the Russian Czar. These acts being mostly temporary, however, and the intentions of those who insisted on the necessity of some reform in the parliament itself becoming more calmly appreciated, the most obnoxious of the acts had been suffered

* A promise of annual parliaments and extended franchise made part of Monmouth's manifesto against James II.

to expire. This relaxation, joined to the now palpable weakness of the Liverpool administration, had given fresh spirits to the Reformers; and numerous meetings with the view to petition the legislature on the subject of a representative reform were held over all the country, but more especially in the populous manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where they were attended by the operatives in great numbers.

The renewed alarm excited in the breasts of many of the higher and middle classes by this agitation, especially in Lancashire, at length on the 16th of August, at Manchester, occasioned a catastrophe which unhappily roused the passions of the whole kingdom, and unquestionably did more to bring the government of that period and its more active adherents into odium, than any occurrence of that eventful time. The particular event alluded to is that lamentable onslaught by an excited and undisciplined yeomanry upon an unarmed and peaceable assemblage of men, women, and children, collected together in St Petersfield, near Manchester, at the instance of Mr Henry Hunt, to listen to a petition for a radical reform of the House of Commons. That Mr Peel should have voluntarily connected his name with this lamentable and disgraceful outrage (for such it was) by gratuitously defending it, was no doubt the highest gratification he ever afforded to his enemies, and the portion of his career most deeply regretted by all his real friends. Had Mr Peel been at that moment a member of the administration, his stepping forward would have been excusable, because natural, and perhaps unavoidable;

for whatsoever may be the advantages of an unpaid magistracy, voluntarily taken upon themselves by a resident gentry, it unquestionably has this serious disadvantage, that, being a voluntary, unrewarded service, any errors of judgment however mischievous, or abuse of trust however gross, on the part of individuals, must be passed over or defended by the government, to avoid the risk of losing the services of the whole; for no man will retain a gratuitous post where he may be cashiered for a false step. But Mr Peel was not under this sort of necessity, and a volunteered defence of that which is indefensible must derogate either from the moral sense or the political discernment of him who makes it. The address of Mr Peel on this unhappy occasion was, like all the addresses in which he put forth his strength, rhetorically artful, as far as the occasion would permit; but neither then nor now could it, nor can it, convince the understanding of any calm and reflecting person.

Whatever might be the opinions of some persons at that period, no lawyer of the present day would deny the meeting of the 16th of August at St Petersfield to be a perfectly legal one. It was convened for a purpose entirely lawful, at a lawful hour, and was unarmed; and the fact of some of those who suffered injury being children, women, and old men, was a proof that violence was neither intended nor even thought of. To disperse such a meeting by an armed force suddenly brought upon it was an outrage upon all law; and to send upon such a service a set of yeomanry excited and undisciplined, was an outrage upon common sense

as well as common law; nor is it to be doubted that Lord Liverpool's cabinet, though under an unhappy necessity to shield and excuse the authors, themselves secretly deplored the deed, of which the responsibility and the odium were thus transferred to them without it being in their power to avoid either. What might be Mr Peel's deeper motives in stepping forward to excuse the Manchester magistrates, it is impossible to say. If he wished to show Lord Liverpool that he was willing to aid the now tottering administration with all the weight of his great talents and high character, all that can be said is, that the occasion was not chosen with his usual astuteness. That the ministry sufficiently needed such help, the events of the session had already proved very abundantly. Amongst these was the vote on Mr Grattan's motion on the Catholic claims—a debate in which, by an unexpected division, Mr Peel was prevented taking any share, which was lost by a majority of two only. The gradual diminution of the paper currency, which went on after the bill for cash-payments became law, was also beginning to produce its sure and inevitable effects; and if Mr Peel intended his speech on the Manchester catastrophe to act as an overture to the government, after-events seemed to argue that Lord Liverpool so understood it.

CHAPTER VI.

Accession of George IV.—Queen Caroline—Her Trial—Mr Peel neutral—Sudden Death of the Queen—The King re-appoints the Ministry—Progress of the Catholic Cause—A Relief Bill carried by the Commons—Mr Peel falters in his Opposition—Distress as Cash-Payments approach—Agitation for Relief—Mr Peel vainly opposes the Repeal of the Husbandry House-Tax—He becomes Home Secretary—Further Agitation for Parliamentary Reform and Repeal of Taxes—Alarm of the Landlords—Fall of Prices—Agricultural Petitions—Mr Brougham moves an Adjustment of Taxes to the Gold Standard—Mr Wyvill's Motion—Mr Western's Motion opposed by Mr Peel—Small-Note Respite Act—Suicide of Lord Londonderry—State of Spain—Its Causes—Spain menaced by France—The French revolutionize Spain—Evasive Conduct of the Ministry.

It has been already observed, that, whether intended or not on the part of Mr Peel, his defence of the Manchester magistracy and of the ministry, after the lamentable transaction of the 16th of August, was in all probability interpreted by the head of that ministry as evidencing the willingness of the speaker to give the administration the aid of his great talents in some official capacity. The events, however, which soon after followed, were certainly such as to make any one of even much less caution than Mr Peel hesitate, before he joined a cabinet apparently fated to

encounter so many adverse circumstances, with so little of strength to resist them. These events were, the death of the aged king, George III., the accession of George IV., and the consequent return to England of the persecuted Caroline Princess of Wales, now, by the death of her father-in-law, Queen of England.

With the deplorable and most impolitic proceedings which followed, Mr Peel had good feeling, good sense, and caution enough to prevent his being in the slightest degree connected. Luckily for himself, he was as yet unconnected officially with the administration, and neither in the prosecution nor in the defence of the unfortunate queen had he any share. Whatever might have been the lapses of that ill-starred princess—and it would require a high degree of faith indeed to believe her conduct unexceptionable—Mr Peel must have felt, familiar as he was with all the sad circumstances of her earlier history, that the proceedings against her were ill judged in the very highest degree, considering the quarter from which they originated; and there is every reason to suppose that the tacit condemnation of Mr Peel and of Mr Canning, who both held themselves conspicuously aloof from all participation in the strange deeds of that disgraceful time, must have contributed to the failure of that Bill of Pains and Penalties which their marked silence condemned perhaps more effectually than their open censure would have done.* Nor is it unreasonable to

* A saying has been attributed to this unfortunate princess which certainly puts in their true moral light the proceedings against her. It is recorded that, in the bitterness of her heart, she said to her legal

suppose that their conduct on this occasion was at the bottom of that ill-concealed distaste with which the king, George IV., was known ever afterwards to regard both these statesmen.

The failure of the Bill of Pains and Penalties against the queen, her sudden demise, and the disgusting scenes of violence which occurred during the conveyance of her body from Brandenburgh House, where she died after a short illness, to the port whence it was to be transported to Germany, still farther weakened the already unpopular administration, and rendered the infusion into it of some new elements of strength absolutely necessary to its continued existence. Nor was the ministerial embarrassment lessened by the conduct of the king, who, at the moment of the queen's death, was in Ireland, where he comported himself in such a way as absolutely to impress the excitable and credulous portion of the population—no small part—with the conviction that the royal countenance was now to be given to the claims of the Catholics, and that emancipation was now at hand. This strange scene of deception on one side, and pitiable credulity on the other, added greatly at the moment to the difficulties of the Liverpool cabinet —a part of whose strength resided in the well-founded belief, that on the Catholic question, as well as on other cardinal points of their policy, George IV. was as completely with them in feeling as ever his father George III.

advisers, "No! I never committed the crime with which I am charged but once—and that was, when I unfortunately became the concubine of Mrs Fitzherbert's husband!" The *mot* is characteristic as well as conclusive.

had been; but which confidence the events at Dublin no doubt shook for a season in the breasts of some.

To this feeling may partly be ascribed the increase of strength obtained by the advocates of the Catholics, which enabled them in April 1821, in spite of the utmost efforts of their opponents, to carry through the House of Common, by a majority of 19, a bill for the removal of the bulk of the remaining disabilities; and to the effect of this feeling, entertained by so many in and out of the House, may be perhaps ascribed the altered tone of Mr Peel, who, in the course of the debates on this subject, now admitted that "the disappointment of the now-expectant Catholics would be a source of pain to him; and that, though he could not conscientiously support any bill for their complete emancipation, he should, if such a measure met with the concurrence of the legislature, do his utmost to reconcile the Protestant community to it." It is impossible not to perceive in this sentiment, so adroitly interwoven with an untiring opposition step by step on the part of the utterer, a foresight of a coming time when the Protestant part of the community must be content to let their religion rest upon better and more Christian grounds than exclusions and disabilities; and that, though this anticipated result was delayed by political accidents in a great measure for eight years, Mr Peel was even then in his heart prepared for it, and only measured the delay that might now intervene by the political obstinacy of its less yielding and less far-seeing enemies in the upper House.

That the administration felt deeply this palpable

though slow progress of opinion in favour of the Catholics, and their demands, needs not be doubted; but another element of weakness more pervading still now began, imperceptibly at first, but slowly and gradually to develop itself. This was that tardy and snail-paced, but continuous fall of prices month after month, week after week, and day after day, which followed the enactment of the cash-payments measure of 1819, and which now began, unless some special and decided temporary reason for the contrary existed, to affect pretty equally all descriptions of commodities, whether agricultural or commercial, and to cause the commencement of a universal groan of distress over the entire community.

As the year 1821 went on, the pervading pressure marched with it; as grain fell in price, Mr Western and the landed interest, of whom in the House of Commons he was tacitly allowed to be the leader and principal adviser, began to discover to their great alarm, that to exclude foreign wheat from our ports until eighty shillings was the price, was no certain means, under a limited currency, and with favourable seasons at home, of establishing a *minimum*, as they had fancied, of *eighty shillings;* and that the exchange of a currency-bill for a corn-bill might turn out to be a blind bargain. And as the prices of the principal articles of commerce sank in the *ratio* in which the bankers diminished their circulation, especially of notes for sums under £5, Mr Alexander Baring and the mercantile part of the House began to find out that the price of gold might not after all have been any true index of the actual depreciation of the currency of the war; and

that the "three-per-cent," so confidently laid down by the economic oracle of the House, Mr Ricardo, as the *ultima Thule* of depression of prices consequent upon the recent change, might probably turn out to be thirty per cent. The consequences of this position of the affairs of the nation soon began to be apparent even in the House of Commons. A reaction against the government, in which the country party were prominent, soon took place, of which one of the first symptoms was the repeal of the tax on husbandry horses, pressed by Mr Curwen, a noted agriculturist of that day, and carried in spite of the government and the efforts of Mr Peel to prevent the vote, against which he spoke with more of bitterness than was usual with him. The speech was brief, but significant. "He felt himself," he said, "compelled to dissent from the tone of congratulation on this event, which seemed so general in the House. He must say that he regretted the repeal of the tax, because he was persuaded that it ought to be the object of all the interests in the country to maintain the public credit. The interest neither of the one class nor of the other would, in his opinion, be consulted by a measure tending, as this certainly did in some degree, to impair public credit."

Such were the symptoms which began to exhibit themselves as the time for the resumption of cash-payments began to approach; and when with the repeal of the tax on husbandry horses we couple the strong effort to get rid of a large slice of the duties on malt, and some of the doctrines put forth during that debate, we shall see ample reason for the fears which these attempts,

in conjunction with the falling prices of grain, seem to have instilled into the sagacious mind of Mr Peel, and ample ground for his desire to strengthen if possible the ministry of Lord Liverpool, upon the continuance of which so much now seemed to be depending.

The result of this general position of the affairs of the ministry and the nation, which endured, with slow aggravations, throughout the whole of the year 1821, was that, after a course of negotiation, a partial change of ministry was determined upon, chiefly, as it should seem, for the purpose of enabling Mr Peel to commence, as it were, a new ministerial career as Secretary of State for the Home Department, an office for which, at that period, he had some qualities admirably adapted. Of this post Mr Peel took possession in the January of 1822, under circumstances by no means calculated to add to what are commonly styled "the sweets of office," but well adapted to try to the uttermost that command of temper, urbanity, courtesy, and winning plausibility, of which he possessed so extraordinary a share. Amongst the other results of the growing pressure to which the approach of May 1823 was gradually subjecting all classes except those who had fixed incomes, was a renewal, in no measured tones, of the demand for a reform in the institutions of the country, and especially of the parliamentary representation, which, during the last century, had been proposed in various shapes by many celebrated politicians of both parties, amongst whom may be mentioned Swift, Bolingbroke, the Earl of Chatham and his son William Pitt, the Duke of Richmond,

Fox, and last, though not least, Edmund Burke, before the excesses of the French Revolution of 1789 "frighted him from his propriety," and which now began to pervade all classes of society. Earl Grey and the Society of the Friends of the People had, in 1793, in the shape of a petition, given a highly coloured picture of the then corrupt state of the representation (as they considered it), and asked for an efficient reform, as it was then deemed, for which it was known that the heads of a bill had been prepared under the same auspices.* In 1821 Mr Lambton, at that time one of the members for the county of Durham, and a near connexion of Earl Grey, drawing his inspiration probably from the same font, brought the subject before the House of Commons, and was defeated by a majority only of twelve, but in a thin house.† In addition to these symptoms of an uneasy and agitated state of the public mind,

* It was on this occasion that Mr Burke made his celebrated defence of the close or rotten boroughs, which he boldly designated as "the shameful parts of the constitution;" but which, he argued, were necessary to the continuation of a mixed government like that of England.

† The bill prepared by Mr Lambton to be brought before the House, had leave been given, is printed in the *Appendix* to *Hansard's Debates* for that year, *vol. v., New Series.* In many respects it is more liberal than the measure of 1830, of which it was a precursor. It proposed to divide the country into districts of counties and boroughs, and gave a vote to every inhabitant householder paying tax or rate. It also reserved the rights, for their lives, of *all* free burgesses. In addition to the household-suffrage, forty-shilling freeholds, copy-holds, or lease-holds, gave votes for county districts. It proposed to limit the duration of polls by multiplying polling stations, and it limited the duration of parliament to three years.

strong signs began to be shown of a determination on the part of the landed interest, either to reduce taxation, including the debt, in some *ratio* commensurate with the real alteration now making in the value of money, or else to return to the depreciation of 1814.

Of these designs being entertained by the now thoroughly alarmed landlords, the proofs were many and sufficiently undisguised; nor were these ideas confined to the landed interest alone, as was very soon made to appear. In short, it now became palpable and evident that the appearance af unanimity with which the hasty measure of 1819 had passed, must have been the fruit of management; and that no small number of members, from the despair of offering any effectual opposition, had been content to be persuaded tacitly to acquiesce in that which, at that time, they could derive neither credit nor benefit from opposing. Out of doors there was just as little unanimity. The directors of the Bank of England, the private London and country bankers, and very many of the mercantile classes, from the first doubted the well-working of the measure. The landed interest, who had been kept quiet by means of an imaginary sanctuary in the corn-law of 1815, were now thoroughly disappointed and alarmed; whilst the capitalists alone, including all persons with fixed incomes, whether derived from personal property or salaries, lauded the measure, and deprecated all attempts at retrogression. The periodical press, being generally influenced by either the government or the Economists, was for the most part hesitating and

silent; but the more independent writers were the contrary. The author of the Political Register, especially, Mr Cobbett, who had been one of the most unwearied advocates of a restoration of cash-payments, but who had warned both the Bullion Committee of 1809 and that of 1819 of the grand error into which they were precipitating themselves and the country, was now as energetic in his denunciations of the act, and in his predictions of the sinister consequences it was certain to produce. And it must be, in candour, admitted on this occasion, that never was the policy of the adage "fas est et ab hostê doceri" better illustrated than now. However extreme many of the political opinions of this original and extraordinary writer might appear to the members of these committees, it ought to have been evident to all, that on this peculiar subject his knowledge was very great and his consequent foresight remarkable; nor should the unpalatable nature of his writings generally have been suffered to stand as a reason for treating with contempt his opinions on a subject which he probably understood really better than any man then living.

The bill, however, was now passed; and his predictions of the moral impossibility of carrying it into full effect were now as unhesitating as were his warnings of the mischievous consequences of passing it. In short, the author of the Register did not flinch from roundly asserting, with that bitterness and ferocity of sarcasm for which he was so remarkable, "that, if ever the act of 1819 went into full effect, he would allow Sidmouth to broil him alive upon a gridiron,

whilst Castlereagh stirred the fire, and Canning stood by to make a jest of his groans; adding, that "if ever the act *did* go into complete effect, it could only be after causing at least a million of persons to perish of hunger." That without ever having gone into full effect, it has helped to cause too many so to perish, is unhappily too true; but at the time this prediction was ventured, the ridicule it excited was not small, especially amongst those who were most destitute of any idea of the serious consequences of any error on such a question. In 1822, the period at which we have now arrived, the aspect of affairs, however, had materially changed. As the directors of the Bank of England and the country bankers gradually decreased their circulation and began to refrain from re-issuing those notes for sums under five pounds of which the 1st of May 1823 was to be the limit of existence, the prices of all commodities, almost without an exception, and of farm produce most especially, steadily and gradually declined, until the kingdom rang with complaints of distress and ruin, and petitions from all classes loaded the table, all praying the House to put an end to a state of things at once so alarming and intolerable, or else by a sweeping reduction of taxes to make the national burdens equitably commensurate with the increased value of money. Nor were these complaints exaggerated. The effects of the act upon all classes were terrible; and to those (no few) who had heavy mortgages on their landed estates or houses, ruin seemed inevitable.*

* One of the most striking proofs of this is to be found in the shape

As the small denominations of notes were cancelled, it soon became evident that an extended issue of five

of a petition presented to the House of Lords by Earl Stanhope, and to the House of Commons (February 21, 1823) by Lord Folkstone, of which the following is an abstract. It is to be found at length in *Hansard's Debates, New Series*, vol. viii. p. 188. It purports to be the petition of Charles Andrew Thompson of Chiswick in the county of Middlesex. The facts of this distressing case, as stated in the petition very succinctly and clearly, are as follows :—

"I. That the petitioner and his father had been for upwards of thirty years Oporto merchants, and had carried on one of the most extensive wine trades: That they realized at last a considerable fortune, and, in 1811 and 1812, invested a portion of their large capital in landed estates.

"II. That their first landed purchase was the estate of Northaw in Hertfordshire, for which they paid in ready money £62,000, and afterwards laid out £10,000 in improvements, making the whole investment £72,000.

"III. That in 1812, petitioner and his father bargained for the estate of Pontiglas, in Herefordshire, belonging to John Ashfordby Trenchard, D.D., the price of which was £60,000, of which £5555 was paid as deposit. The title, however, being thought insufficient by the purchaser's lawyer, a chancery-suit ensued, the result of which was, that petitioner and his father paid for the estate in purchase-money and interest £71,957, 19s 5d., receiving from Dr Trenchard for rents £6839, 1s. 9d., making balance to Trenchard £65,118, 17s. 8d.

IV. That between 1812 and 1819, when the suit ended, petitioner and his father having sustained heavy losses in their trade in consequence of the rapid fall in prices, were unable to pay Dr Trenchard, and were constrained to give him a mortgage for £65,000 on the two estates of Pontiglas and Northaw.

"V. That between 1819 and July 1821, the petitioner paid in part of this sum of £65,000, a sum of £5000, and £8000 interest on same up to July 1821.

"VI. That the estate of Pontiglas remained in the hands of peti-

pound notes could not be kept up; because, unless coins were issued to the full amount of these notes,

tioner until he became bankrupt, during which period he received from it £3410 as rent and for timber sold.

"VII. That, in July 1821, petitioner offered the two estates of Northaw and Pontiglas for sale; but he could not obtain for the two a sum equal to the mortgage upon them.

"VIII. That in October 1821, petitioner became a bankrupt.

"IX. That thereupon Dr Trenchard took the proper legal steps to retain the profits of the estates, and has since given notice of foreclosing the mortgage.

"X. That petitioner thus has actually paid to Trenchard £18,555, whilst he has received from the estate of Pontiglas £3410, and is in danger of both losing this estate and that of Northaw, which cost, in 1811, £72,000.

"XI. That, on the other hand, Dr Trenchard has received from petitioner in cash £18,555, together with the rents of the estate from the time of sale up to 1819; and that he has now applied to petitioner's assignees for leave to take the two estates, together with all arrears of rent due from February 1820 (which with timber felled may be £3500), in lieu of the debt of £60,000.

"XII. That the assignees of petitioner are now praying the Court of Chancery to agree to the above proposal, and that, if granted, Trenchard will have received the whole rents and profit of the estate (except two years), and for timber £1470; that he will have been paid £18,555 in cash by petitioner; and, in addition to his own estate, will have acquired that of Northaw, which cost petitioner £72,000.

"XIII. That petitioner and his late father, in 1811, purchased other estates, in the counties of Middlesex, Essex, and Hants, for £33,166, which have now been actually sold for £12,000. That petitioner and his father by these losses, and the loss upon their stock in trade from the same cause, were reduced to bankruptcy. That petitioner's father died in 1822 of a broken heart, and that petitioner, a ruined man, has seven children, seven of his sister's, and ten of his brother's, all dependent upon him, and wholly destitute.

retail prices could not be supported, and on retail prices wholesale prices depend. But this the bankers could not, for obvious reasons, think of doing; and hence the depression of 1822 soon became extraordinary, backed as it was by plentiful harvests and a heavier stock of fat cattle and sheep than has probably ever existed in Great Britain since. In fact, so unparalleled was the depression of stock that beef and mutton sold currently in country markets at *threepence* or even *twopence halfpenny per pound;* whilst in the same markets wheat brought hardly *five shillings the bushel.*

The opponents of the ministry, aware of the fears and irritation of the landed interest, and indeed of all men whose incomes were not fixed, quickly availed themselves of the rapidly turning tide; and on the 11th February 1822, Mr Brougham (who it has been already seen was excluded by a vote of the House from the committee of 1819) moved a resolution to the effect that, in justice, a reduction of taxes ought now to take place, until the burdens of the country were adjusted to the altered value of money.

"XIV. The petitioner ended by praying the House to remedy this cruel injustice, and to stay his total beggary, by such an equitable adjustment of contracts between man and man as might reduce all debts contracted in a depreciated money in a *ratio* as nearly commensurate as possible with the augmentation of the value of the money in which they are by law now payable."

This melancholy case is only one of innumerable similar cases that occurred at the same disastrous period. In fact, the extraordinary nominal rise in the value of land created vast speculation, and, in almost every case, the buyers only paid for the estates purchased by mortgaging the land for a large portion of its nominal value.

In the course of this speech, which, though able as an oration, was by no means very remarkable for consistency of argument, Mr Brougham insisted, that since the act of 1819 was passed there was no power to recede from that rash step, and that the only practicable way to relieve the country, and especially the land, was a reduction of those taxes which most augmented the cost of production. Mr Brougham, who in his address proved that he, at all events, understood as much of the matter as the committee from which he was excluded, was by no means sparing in his expressions as to the measure adopted, nor in his allusions to the circumstances under which it was adopted. Alluding to the price of labour, and the effects of taxation in raising that price, and to the injustice of doubling the value of the money in which that labour was paid, without any commensurate reduction of imposts, Mr Brougham said—

"It was in the recollection of the House, that during the year 1814 the Board of Agriculture addressed a circular to the various counties of England. The answers to that circular were embodied in their reports which were laid before parliament. In these reports it was demonstrated that the same quantity of labour which in 1792 cost £85, rose in 1803 to £118, and in 1813 to £160. With respect to the year 1812, it was but justice to the argument to add, that that year was the period of the greatest depreciation. Allowing for the amount of depreciation 25 *per cent.*, and subtracting that sum from the rise in the price of labour, it would leave the calculation thus—that the same quantity of labour that in 1792 cost £85, in 1814 cost £125. Between that period and the present time, there had been a fall in the nominal price of labour, but

not to the amount at which it was in 1803. He was not far from the mark in taking the rise in the expenses of cultivation from the years immediately before the war at an increase of one-half. He rather underrated, he felt, than overrated it; but when he added poor-rates, which must be viewed in the light of an increase in the cost of labour, the result was, that the expenses of cultivation had risen two-thirds, or were even doubled. The amount of pressure being undisputed, every branch of the public economy looked forward to that relief which a thorough retrenchment could alone effect. But on no class did the weight so seriously lie as on the agricultural body. There were (hear, hear) special reasons why the same weight, falling on other branches, could not be so injurious to them. The agriculturist did not, like the manufacturer, possess the power of accommodating supply to demand. He was at the mercy of fluctuations against which the manufacturer could provide by a limitation of supply."

Here Mr Brougham falls into the error of the committee, and measures the extent of depreciation by the price of gold bullion; unheeding of the instructive truth that the very preparation to withdraw from circulation the excess of paper had reduced wheat from twelve to six shillings the bushel, and butchers' meat in a proportion still more startling. Of the committee and their measures Mr Brougham spoke in these terms:—

"He had not enjoyed the honour of being a member of the Bullion Committee, not because he had refused to serve, but probably because he had been judged unfit for the office. It had seemed good, he repeated, to those in whom the selection had been invested to exclude his name from the list; and when the question of his exclusion had been brought before the

House, it had seemed good to the House to sanction his being shut out. Of that he did not complain. * * * *
He could not but think, however, after the deepest consideration, that the House had taken a most unfortunate step (hear). He imputed no blame upon that point to ministers; nor did he cast reflections upon others who with perfect consistency abetted the course chosen. What he blamed was the original sin of 1797, which, by first interfering with the currency, distorted the whole internal affairs of the country—made it impossible for any man to say from year to year, nay from month to month, what he was worth—and put all at last into such a state that a return to the original system was attended with evils greater than those which caused a departure from it. To say that he was now aware of any mode by which, at that time, the currency could have been regulated, was to go farther than the present question required; but he must lament that more attention had not been paid to the enormous mischiefs that were certain under the course adopted. How bad soever a depreciated currency might be—how bad as an example—how bad soever and detrimental to the character of the country the tampering with it permanently—yet could he not help regretting most deeply—always admitting the case to be a choice of evils, the least of which was frightfully enormous,—that one side only of the dilemma had been viewed, and that reference had not been made to the fatal prospect presented by the other.

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Having now, however, returned to the old standard of currency, the first mode of alleviating the misery of the former was to relieve him from the taxes by which he was oppressed (hear). But still, in defiance of all retrenchment and all economy, much of public burden would necessarily remain; and he had no hesitation in saying that, if after every possible reduction had been effected, if, after a large amount of load was taken off, the country should still find the state of the farming interest so bad that landed gentlemen could not continue to

exist in such a state of things, he was not prepared to say that the country ought not to go farther for relief. His decided opinion upon the subject was, that when the pressure was so great and the interest so mighty (for the very existence of the state was bound up in the prosperity of the land), the country had only one limit of relief—the making that relief effectual (hear, hear). If one measure of reduction would not do, recourse must be had to another; and if all were found to be insufficient, the nation must prepare for other measures—measures only to be justified by paramount unreasoning necessity! (loud cheers)."

This bold and in many respects equitable proposal, enforced afterward by Sir James Graham in his "Corn and Currency," was feebly replied to by the Marquis of Londonderry and by Mr Ricardo, who, after denying that taxation was the cause of the distress of agriculture, voted for the motion, as being in his view of the question all but nugatory. Mr Ricardo admitted that those who held that the act of 1819 would necessitate a fall of prices universally to the extent of *fifty per cent.*, might reasonably enough attribute distress to a change which went to double the weight of the taxes; but as he held that the act of 1819 had only brought about a difference of *five per cent.*, he could not attribute the pressure to that act, although he would vote for a reduction of taxes to that amount.

Neither Sir Robert nor Mr Peel seems to have been present on this occasion, as their names do not appear in the published lists of the majority and minority. The motion was negatived by 212 against 108 votes; some of the bitterest foes of the act of 1819 voting against it. It is observable that Mr Ricardo, whilst

denying the effect of taxation to produce pressure, and ascribing it to "over-production," never attempted to explain why this over-production was never felt until the act of 1819 had necessitated a "short production" of bank-notes; nor did he ever explain how it happened that "over-production" disappeared as soon as the small-note bill enlarged the produce of bank-paper, which it did from 1823 to 1825-26.* Be this as it may, however, this debate was only a precursor of the storm which, throughout the session of 1822, raged against the act of 1819, with a fury which it was hopeless for the Economists to attempt to oppose or to appease.

This was soon apparent in the proposal of Mr Wyvill, who, on the 8th of May, the House going into committee to consider of the report on agricultural distress, moved "that it is the opinion of this House that the best and most effectual relief that can be given to the agricultural interest is a large remission of taxation," and who insisted that "twenty millions"

* In a pamphlet entitled "Remarks on the Commercial Legislation of 1846," by William Ward, Esq., is the following passage: "Mr Ricardo lived to change this opinion (as to the effect of the act of 1819 upon the value of the currency), and shortly before he died expressed that he had done so. The late Sir W. Heygate was with him, and he said "Ay! Heygate, you and the few others who opposed us on the cash-payments have *proved right*. I said the difference at most would be only *five per cent.*, and you said that, at the least, it would be *twenty-five per cent.*" This is stated on the authority of the late Alderman Heygate. It is a pity that Mr Ricardo did not, as some atonement to his country for the tremendous mischief he then, past doubt, occasioned, publish this recantation under his own hand.

ought to be taken off at a blow. This motion, which was supported by Mr Western, Mr Hudson Gurney, Mr J. Williams, Mr Beaumont, Mr Benett, Mr Tierney, and Mr Brougham, was opposed by Lord Londonderry and Mr Secretary Peel, who contented himself with saying that, "even if it were true that the act of 1819 added 'forty per cent.' to the taxation of the agricultural classes, that addition might be borne." The motion was negatived by a majority of sixty-three.

This attack was, however, followed up in a more formal fashion by Mr Western, who, on the 11th of June, moved for "a committee to inquire into the effects of the Act 59 George III. cap. 49," which is the designation of the act of 1819. The mover did this in an address certainly of great power, in which he showed the intensity of that delusion which led the committee of 1819 to conclude that, under the extraordinary circumstances under which the currency was placed during the war, the price of gold (if its price was ever really known) could possibly be a true measure of the extent of the depreciation of the circulation of that period, and in which he showed also that, although wheat, or grain in the aggregate, varies from year to year with the seasons, yet on an average of years there is no such sure indication of the value of a currency as the price of wheat, or of grain in the aggregate.

Mr Western's address on this occasion was, however, outdone by the powerful speech of Mr Matthias Attwood, at that time member for the borough of Callington, a man of acute intellect and great general

powers, but who, strange to say, was seduced by the love of a favourite theory to believe in the possibility (*after the measure of* 1819 *had become law and been in part obeyed as law*) of returning by means of a deliberate legislative enactment to a highly depreciated standard of value. On the subject of the real cause of the mischief under which the nation was then writhing, Mr Attwood thus expressed himself:—

"The immediate and obvious cause of the difficulties now experienced is the low monied price at which our productions and commodities exchange one against the other. That is the cause, however it may have been occasioned. But whence comes it that low monied prices should be capable of producing difficulty, poverty, and national distress? Money is not wealth. The *wealth* of a nation consists in the abundance of its productions. Money is only the means by which wealth is estimated, but is not wealth in itself. It is a means of account merely as money; and it is of little importance to the real wealth of a nation whether its property and commodities are exchanged at a high or a low monied price. That is undoubtedly true. It is not, therefore, the mere existence of low prices alone which has occasioned the present national distress. It is because the low prices that now exist have succeeded to a very high rate of monied prices that recently existed. It is that it was in those high monied prices that our present existing pecuniary engagements were formed, and that it is under the present low prices that they are to be discharged. It is because the same nominal amount of money possesses a different signification from that which it had when these contracts and engagements were made. It is because our money has kept accounts falsely. It has given a false estimate; and it has, in this way, given the property of one man to his neighbour through the whole extent of the country. It has given the property of the debtor to his

creditor,—of the tenant to the landlord; but it makes reprisals on that landlord for it in turn, gives away his property to annuitants public and private, and to him, whoever he be, that has the mortgages on the estate."

After some perfectly suitable remarks on some of the causes which, at the critical time, rendered the prices of gold a most delusive test of the real depreciation of the currency of the war, but in the course of which remarks much was omitted that ought to have been added to demonstrate the truth entirely, the member for Callington thus described the course that ought to have been pursued:—

"The course was obvious and manifest:—first, to cause the operation on the price of bullion by the bank to cease; next, to return to the circulation the bank-notes that had been withdrawn, and to have maintained the circulation at the highest level of the war and of 1817. That step taken, and the dangers which immediately threatened thus guarded against, then ought the House to have paused. Great interests were before them. There was a derangement of long standing, which was now interwoven with all the vital interests of the state. Great deliberation, then, and great caution were necessary. Haste, or impatience, or vehemence, was ill suited indeed to the period. Let the circulation have been kept up to the level of the war, and the price of bullion would have been seen gradually to rise. It would have risen to the level of the general rise of property and of commodities. Then the price of bullion would at length have accurately and really measured the rate of the depreciation of our paper money,—the depreciation of the standard of the war, and of the standard of all our debts, contracts, and property,—a standard now so vitally interwoven with all our interests; and this rate and degree of depreciation having been ascertained accurately, cautiously, and deliberately,

with no consideration bearing upon it lost sight of, then ought the House to have proceeded to the establishment of the metallic standard of value,—to have adjusted that standard to the precise value of the paper money for which, in future, it was to be the substitute,—to have made value correspond with the level to which the paper money had sunk, whatever that was demonstrated to be,—and then and thus the House would have restored to the country a metallic standard of value as perfect in point of security, as perfect in point of limitation, as perfect in respect to its invariability, as any standard that ever existed or could exist amongst us."

After the striking address of the member for Callington, Mr Secretary Peel spoke, but unquestionably in some respects at great disadvantage.

It was now useless to attempt to deny the failure of the predictions of the Economists as to the working of the measure of 1819. It was now May 1822; and instead of being in a state of innocent and complacent wonderment at their having been afraid of an addition of "three per cent. to the value of money," as Mr Ricardo predicted they would, the people universally felt themselves sinking daily deeper into difficulty and bankruptcy, and discontent was at its height over the whole kingdom, all men who reflected at all attributing the mischief to the diminution of the paper money which formerly circulated. This point Mr Peel was therefore compelled to evade as he best could, enlarging instead upon the difficulty or rather impossibility of retracing a step of this nature when once hazarded, and attacking in turn the weaker portions of Mr Attwood's proposal, some of which were sufficiently assailable. Alluding to the proposal of a committee to

whom was to be assigned the task of determining the amount or extent of the depreciation of the standard which the House was to enact, Mr Peel went on thus:—

"He (Mr Peel) called upon the House to pause before they agreed to a motion for an inquiry, the object of which was thus avowed to be to reduce the standard of value in this country probably by one-third. He begged to ask what would be the state of the agricultural and mercantile interests, and indeed of every interest in the country, during the interval which must elapse between the commencement of such an inquiry and the period at which they might hope to arrive at the termination of their labours? Good God! and could the honourable member who last spoke think that, by supporting such a proposition, he was doing that which was likely to calm the public mind, establish a just standard of value, and secure general prosperity? Could the honourable member for Callington indeed anticipate such results from a proposition which went to reduce our standard of value from twenty to fourteen shillings? He called upon the House to look at what would be the immediate consequences of such a measure. Let them vote that which was proposed to them to-night, and to-morrow every man of common sense would be calling in every debt, and trying to possess himself of every guinea in the country; so that, when the committee had closed their labours, he might be ready to profit by the new state of things! What fluctuations—what derangement—what confusion—would not such a measure cause?"

These remarks are no doubt unanswerable. An open avowed depreciation of money cannot be effected deliberately. It must be preceded by some sudden and arbitrary order to stay all legal proceedings consequent, or else a scene of universal confusion must

ensue, from the universal calling in of all balances and debts, as far as possible, on the part of creditors, in order to evade for themselves the effect of such a step. This must of course include a stoppage of the whole banking system, as every bank-note would, under such a state of things, be returned and gold demanded; so difficult is it to cure an error like that of 1819, when once perpetrated. On the subject of a readjustment of contracts, the Secretary's argument is less conclusive.

"Ever since 1814 (continued Mr Peel) the country has been accommodating itself to a new state of things; and after having accomplished that object, the House were now told by an honourable baronet (Sir Francis Burdett) that the object of the honourable gentleman (Mr Western) was to reduce the value of the standard pound from twenty to fourteen shillings. How was it possible to examine and to readjust contracts upon that principle? With respect to the public creditor, how was it possible to readjust the contract? Supposing one of those creditors could be found who had advanced but £70, and now received £100, he might say, 'I advanced the money in 1797, 1798, or 1800, when the currency was not so much depreciated as it was afterwards, but the restoration of the ancient standard was then pledged to me,' how would they deal with him? How would they deal with persons who had bought annuities within the last eight years? Each of them had advanced no money to the state; but because he had bought his annuity, suppose at 95, were they now to reduce his dividend? If such measures should be entertained in the House of Commons,—if the Commons of England could so far degrade themselves as to sanction such a proceeding,—there was an end of that public faith which hitherto, in all circumstances of difficulty, had been the pride of the country and its best support. But admitting its fitness, how was it possible such a principle could be acted

upon? Numerous contracts had been closed during the last eight years. But the closing of a contract, if such a course was taken, would be no bar to its being examined with a view to a new arrangement; as it would be obviously unjust to deny a punctual man a participation in those advantages which would be open to him who, not being punctual, had failed to close his contract."

Mr Peel concluded his speech with a denial of the extent of the distress as described by many members who supported the motion; and such pressure as he did admit he ascribed to other causes than the change in the monetary system of the country. In denying any extensive distress, he laid great force upon the fact that there was in 1822 a nominal diminution of the poor-rates as compared with those of 1821; and to the fact that, though wages and profits were low, yet a great amount of business was transacting, especially in manufactures; and he finished by pointing to the distress admitted to exist in some of the continental countries, where no monetary changes at all had taken place.

Upon an ordinary hearer this address must have produced a considerable effect; but those who are capable of criticising it minutely will perceive that the Secretary carefully evades the question of the extent of the additional value given to the current money by the act of 1819; and in dissuading the House from any attempt to cure the mischiefs which he felt compelled to admit as a portion of its consequences, he relies chiefly upon a fallacy, which, however plausible, ought never to be permitted to decide any question of

right and wrong. This fallacy consists in the argument that, because in many or most cases exact fractional justice cannot be done, nothing is therefore to be done. This is a conclusion that no prudent or cautious logician can ever admit to be sound.

The real question is, whether to do nothing be not a greater evil than to attempt something, however imperfect that something may be; and if this be decided in the affirmative, as in this case it must, the whole objection falls to the ground. If a parallel case be taken, this becomes very evident. After the great fire of London, for instance, so completely were all lines of demarcation confounded, and such was the destruction of title-deeds, that it became impossible to distinguish exactly the innumerable freehold properties of which the ancient city had been composed; but because this difficulty existed, is it therefore to be argued that the authorities ought to have made no attempt at all to do justice substantially, but to have parcelled out the ruins as it might happen to chime in with the interests of themselves and their friends? No man was hardy enough to assert this; and hence, although fractional justice was impossible, substantial justice was effectually done by the commissioners to whom the arrangement was intrusted. Had the Bullion Committees of 1810 and 1819 been possessed of a real knowledge of that which they were appointed to do, the same sort of justice might have been secured for the debtor interest. There would not have been any insuperable difficulty in dividing the eighteen years, during which the depreciation of the current money proceeded, into

four or more periods, and in ascertaining, by a close approximation to the truth, the average extent of depreciation in each. From this a scale might have been constructed, by which every debt taking date in any one of the periods, whether it were a public or a private debt, might have been equitably discharged in the restored standard money of 1819. Instead of doing this, these committees first underrated the extent of the depreciation which they all along admitted, and next refused to make that which they did admit any part of the question of settlement, when the restoration of a metallic standard was to be carried, forgetting that, though in individual and private cases this huge injustice might be overcome by the energy of parties interested, this cannot be the case with public engagements, where the wrong is perennial, and where it and its consequences must accumulate from generation to generation.

The result of this debate was, that the motion for inquiry was negatived by the large majority of 194 to 30—a result that must have a good deal surprised those to whom all the circumstances of the time were not known. That this singular division was partly caused by the discordant views and wild schemes of many of the most active opponents of the measures of the political economists, there is no reason for denying; but there was another circumstance in existence which much more materially influenced the vote on this occasion. That circumstance was a knowledge on the part of most of those who voted that the ministry had already, as they thought, virtually decided the struggle by con-

senting to a repeal of that portion of the act of 1819 which went to compel the final withdrawal of all bank-notes for sums under £5 from and after the first day of May 1823. The fact was, that before the debate upon the motion for inquiry into the state of the country commenced, the cabinet, appalled by the rapid fall of all produce, but more especially of grain and live stock, gave way, and let their intention be known in time to ensure the rejection of the motion. Hence the vote of that night was in reality illusory, most of those who voted in the majority doing so because, as they believed, the difficulty was to be smoothed in another manner by a modification of the obnoxious act.

The truth, however, though concealed from the public at the moment, became apparent after the lapse of a few weeks, "the small-note bill," as it was termed, being passed almost *sub silentio* by both houses in the July following. In fact, both the ministers themselves and the leaders of the Economists had become thoroughly depressed by the universal fall of prices and consequent universal difficulty and irritation that were now taking place; and although they resisted Mr Western's efforts in appearance, they were in reality prepared to yield. The mode they adopted was signally unhappy, proving, as it did, their ignorance of the principles which govern that which they were trying to establish, viz. a convertible paper circulation based upon a small and insecure because insufficient reserve of gold and silver. The clamour and deep irritation which now pervaded the country, however, rendered it imperatively necessary that something

should be done to quiet the public mind. No retreat was possible; and the only moves remaining for the government upon the political chess-board were, either to repeal the act of 1819 *in toto*, or to modify some of its leading provisions. The last alternative was much the easiest at the moment, and it was adopted. The existing pressure and consequent national alarm were evidently the fruits of the operations of the bankers, who were gradually narrowing their issues in order to come step by step to the final extinction of the notes for sums under £5 on the 1st of May 1823. The turning of this screw the cabinet had now determined to arrest; and on the 2d of July 1822, the small-note bill, a bill which repealed that portion of the act of 1819 which enacted the extinction of the smaller bank-notes from and after the first day of May 1823, and respited them, as its proposers fondly supposed, for eleven years, and, as the public still more fondly believed, for ever, was passed by the House of Commons almost in silence. On the 16th July the same bill passed the Lords after the same fashion as that in which it passed the Commons, the silence of the Economists in both houses being more expressive than any speeches could have been.

Through the Commons the bill would have passed without an observation, had not Mr James, one of the members for Carlisle, persisted in opposing it, and dividing the House upon the question. Mr James began by asking the all-important question, "Whether, in case the bill passed, that portion of the act of 1819 which secured the instant convertibility

of all bank-notes into gold and silver would remain in force?" On the reply of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the affirmative, Mr James said, that "in that case the people had the remedy in their own hands, and those who preferred paper to gold deserved whatever might happen. As, however, he believed this step was intended to be the first backwards to interminable paper money he should divide the House." The bill was carried by forty-seven to four. In the Lords the bill was passed without a division, but not without the extraordinary denial on the part of Lord Liverpool, that the step was taken with any view of its acting so as to mitigate either agricultural or any other form of national suffering. That, after this strange avowal, his lordship should have omitted to state any other reason, real or ostensible, for such a measure, need not surprise any one.

The most remarkable feature of these proceedings was, however, the apparent ignorance of all parties of the perils of that which they were about to do. From the short conversation which took place when the small-note bill passed the House of Lords, it appeared that there existed an opinion that the obligation to pay in gold and silver on demand, which, by the act of 1819, was imposed upon all bankers, would preclude any over-issue of paper on the part of the country bankers. How an opinion so absurd came to be entertained it is not easy to imagine, but there can exist no doubt of its being held, and by many members of both houses. They seem not to have reflected that the same sacrifice of capital which enabled the

country banker to keep a small reserve of Bank of England paper, would enable him to keep the same amount ready in gold, and that no banker would issue notes at all if he expected to be called upon to redeem any large portion of them at once. Nor do they seem to have been aware that amongst country bankers it was universally believed that the necessity they were under of giving bills on London for their notes, when in possession of a rival bank, constituted a sufficient check against over-issue; these bankers never once considering that if their respective issues were extended in the same proportions, the means of doing this would increase as the issues themselves augmented. Whether the Economists in either house were aware of these truths it is impossible to say, but certain it is they gave no utterance to them. The Small-Note Act was voted in silence, as if it were a mere innovation upon the letter and not the spirit of the act of 1819, and not pregnant with any consequences either to be feared or deprecated. They received it as if it were an unmeaning sacrifice to the clamours of a people who complained without being cognizant of the real causes of their sufferings, which, when they could not be denied, were attributed to "over-production," and "the transition from war to peace."

Whatever may be judged to be the real causes of the agitation and difficulty which, at this period, pervaded all classes throughout the realm, both causes and consequences were in practice, if not in theory, understood by foreign nations, who were not slow to

take advantage of them. It was at this critical period that an event happened which may be called, and not improperly, the first symptom of that diminished influence abroad, which England was now fated to feel.

In treating of this significant event, it is hardly necessary to remind the reader that, on the part of Great Britain, the last five years of the war, from 1810 to 1815, were spent in the struggle to dislodge the French from Spain, which, after a vast expenditure of blood and of treasure, was at last triumphantly effected, the Spaniards themselves assisting in the work. During the progress of this contest on the part of the Spanish people themselves, considerable debts had been contracted by the central junto, or provisional government, which loans had, for the greater part, been made by British capitalists, native or resident. When the great conflict was brought to a close, however, in 1814, and Ferdinand VII. released by Bonaparte, who had most basely entrapped him, again set upon the Spanish throne, these debts became a stumbling-block of no ordinary sort. They were of course nominally and formally recognised by the monarch in whose cause, ostensibly, they were contracted; but the power of the imbecile Ferdinand was itself only nominal, and he was totally without the means of meeting these engagements; for of his wish to meet them there is no reason to doubt. Ferdinand, in short, was only in the position in which other Spanish rulers had found themselves. In the eye of the world he seemed to reign over Spain almost absolutely; but he reigned over a people who never

would suffer themselves to be taxed, and whom no power could ever tax; and hence, though called "*el rey absoluto*," he presented, like our own Charles II., the curious spectacle of a monarch, in name absolute, but in fact at times almost in want of the comforts of life.

This position of the restored King of Spain was of course known to the British cabinet; and at the peace of 1815 it seemed incumbent upon them to devise some means by which the British holders of Spanish government-bonds might stand some chance of being paid. But this was no easy matter. The former revenues of the kings of Spain had been derived principally from Spanish America; but, with the exception of Cuba, the Spanish American colonies were now in a state of revolt. On the proclamation of Joseph Bonaparte as King of Spain, the American colonies had refused to render allegiance to a usurper; and once cut loose from the country which drained their resources, they soon resolved in any event to be independent. Ferdinand, therefore, on ascending the Spanish throne, soon found that his American revenues were dried up; and that the income of the kingdom was now confined to the sums raised in Spain under the Fueros, and such additions as could be drawn from the Island of Cuba; in all, a sum under five millions annually. This was insufficient to support the expenses of the state, the war against the colonial insurgents, which the Spaniards carried on with their wonted pertinacity and obstinacy, and, at the same time, to discharge the interest of the bonds, to the payment of which

Ferdinand was bound. It now became the task of the British minister to try to cure this *deficit*; and to do this only one method remained—the seizure of the property of the Spanish church, which, could it have been sold for anything like its real value, was very valuable.

In order to carry out this project, it was first necessary to change in essence the government of Spain, and to give the country a new constitution. The sacrifices which Great Britain had made to vindicate Spanish independence gave her a colourable right to interfere in the settlement of the restored monarchy This was accordingly done as well as the materials at hand would allow. During the occupation of the country by the French and British troops, a class had sprung up, chiefly in the towns, who, to French indifference to, or hatred of, the Catholic religion, had joined English ideas of a free constitution, and of a government through a parliament. To this class the British cabinet appealed; and a constitution under which the ancient Cortes were to be convoked, under a system of election which gave preponderance to the urban constituencies, was received by them with pleasure. Amongst this body of men that attachment to the Church which still characterizes the majority of Spaniards, was extinct. They had also imbibed the doctrines of that depraved philosophy (then so miscalled), which teaches that relief to the poor is not only useless but pernicious, and were soon persuaded to confiscate that church property, which in Spain is the patrimony of the

poor, in order to pay the usurers who had hoped to amass fortunes by lending money on the most disadvantageous terms during the struggle with Napoleon. To this nefarious scheme the imbecile Ferdinand, whose bigotry was of the most contemptible order, could offer only a vain opposition. A majority of the towns and of the generals in command of the troops were in the interest of the liberals as they were styled; a struggle took place; the monarch at length was coerced into acquiescence in a step which he conscientiously deemed both robbery and sacrilege, and much of the church property was seized, and some alienated on terms the most disastrous.

Out of this position of affairs, however, now arose an event which was to astonish Europe by the sight of a bitter humiliation inflicted upon England by a king who, a few years before, had declared that "he owed his crown (under God) to the Prince Regent of Great Britain and Ireland." In adopting the plan of alienating the property of the Spanish Church, and coercing the king into the ratification of the sales, the British ministers had gone, though with reluctance, too far. The despotic thrones of Europe, Russia especially, to whom the name freedom was a word at once hateful and fearful, associated as it was with terrible recollections, had from the first disliked the new constitution in Spain and British influence in that country; but the spectacle of a king coerced by his legislature they were determined not to tolerate. Into the views of Russia and Austria, Louis the Eighteenth, who was a man of great sagacity,

though too fond of ease, was not disinclined to come; the more so because he saw the time was now at hand for obtaining a little popularity in France by a blow at England, whose triumphs at the close of the war still rankled in the French mind. Instigated, therefore, by Russia and Austria, the minister of Louis, M. Villele, peremptorily gave the Spanish government to understand that the spectacle then exhibited by Spain was offensive to France, and inconsistent with the monarchical principle. He described Ferdinand as reduced by the new constitution to a mere degraded puppet, compelled by a faction to ratify spoliations which he in conscience abhorred as sacrilegious; and finished by demanding certain modifications of the Spanish constitution, the effect of which would be to restore to the king the functions of a monarch, and enable him at all times to interpose a veto when measures offensive to his sense of justice and religion were proposed to him. If this were refused, the alternative was a war with France.

That this aggression on the part of the Bourbons and monarchical France, opposed only by Lafayette, Manuel, Foy, and the theoretical republicans, must have been necessarily a matter of extreme embarrassment and mortification to the British ministry, is very evident. Here was presented to the world the spectacle of a government aiming a deadly blow at the moral influence of Great Britain, which very government confessedly owed its existence to the enormous expenditure of blood and treasure on the part of the country now struck at. In defending Spanish

independence, and in restoring to the Bourbon family the thrones of France and Spain, Great Britain had spent hundreds of millions, and sacrificed thousands of lives. The return now was the utter destruction of British influence in Spain by those very Bourbons. That all parties in this country should be indignant at this procedure on the part of Louis, and that all Europe should expect an armed resistance by England to this insulting aggression on an ally by a pretended friend, was not extraordinary.

Those who thus expected, however, looked only at the surface of affairs. The aphorism was ascribed to Talleyrand, that "the Bourbons during their exile had learned nothing and forgotten nothing." Aphorisms always, however, admit of exceptions, and so did this of M. Talleyrand. Louis the Eighteenth, who was a man of much sagacity, had at all events learned something. He had become enabled to perceive that at this crisis the internal condition of Great Britain was critical, and consequently weak, in spite of the external signs of greatness which the country continued to exhibit. The French monarch was aware that the experimental change in the value of the currency, which was supposed to be achieved, trembled in the balance. He saw that its approaching completion had filled the nation with complaints, that even the taxes requisite for the peace establishment were raised with difficulty, and that the whole monetary system of the kingdom was in such a position that a sudden panic might now overset it. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of the British cabinet, therefore, the French

minister, aware of the part the monied interest here must take, unhesitatingly persevered in his demands upon the Spanish government, and the position of Lord Liverpool and his colleagues became painful in the extreme. Mr Peel was now to find that a seat in the cabinet was anything but an easy seat. In vain did that cabinet beseech the Spanish ministers to concede enough to stop the advance of a French army into Spain, to resist which was hopeless. The Spaniards, either urged on by that unbending pride and haughty pertinacity which are the characteristics of their race, or else buoyed up by an ignorant reliance upon an armed assistance from England in the last resort, steadily refused to give way; and the King of France, encouraged by Russian and Austrian countenance, prepared to send a hundred thousand men across the Pyrenees under his relative the Duke d'Angoulême to alter the Spanish constitution by main force. That all Europe should at this extraordinary crisis expect a declaration of war against France by England was only a natural consequence; and certainly the irritation in this country at this trying juncture was extreme. The whole of the papers relative to the negotiations as to Spanish affairs were of course laid before parliament which was now sitting; and seldom has stronger language been employed within those walls than was used during the debates of which these papers were the foundation.

A little before the occurrence of this *coup d'état* of the French government, a singular and tragical occurrence had somewhat modified the composition of the

British administration. This event was the suicide of the Marquis of Londonderry, better known as Lord Castlereagh, who, in this sad way, closed a career which, for reasons not easily explained, had made him one of the most unpopular ministers that ever helped to rule this country. The catastrophe, which could not be concealed, was attributed by the coroner's jury to temporary insanity; nor were there wanting persons ready to testify that during the earlier portion of his life Lord Castlereagh had betrayed temporary symptoms of this terrible malady. It has been asserted, though perhaps upon authority somewhat questionable, that the irritation of mind which led to the rash deed was the result of a plot, dexterously but diabolically laid, by which the unfortunate nobleman's character was implicated in a way not to be disproved, and as little to be borne by any man of manly feelings. For the sake of our common nature, every one of right feeling must be slow to credit this shocking story, however strongly and confidently affirmed. Be the cause of alienation of mind, however, what it might, it is too certain that since the execution of the celebrated Earl of Strafford, popular feeling never exhibited itself so revoltingly as it did on the occasion of this miserable catastrophe.*

* It is on record that numbers of persons who had come to town to be eye-witnesses of the death of Strafford, rode through the villages in the vicinity of London on their return, waving their hats, and shouting, "His head is off! His head is off!" The conduct of the Westminster populace at the unfortunate Lord Londonderry's funeral was little less vindictive.

That the death of this nobleman weakened the administration of which he was a member can hardly be affirmed. He was succeeded in the Foreign Office by Canning, a man more popular, of greater talent, and unquestionably of much greater lubricity of character. For some reason not very distinct, the new Foreign Secretary was supposed by many to be more popular in his political leanings than was his predecessor; and hence, as far as general opinion was concerned, the ministry had gained strength by his accession. The negotiations, however, respecting Spanish affairs, which had been conducted not only at the Congress of Verona, but also separately at Paris, had been mostly intrusted to the Duke of Wellington, and his known political bias rendered it very improbable, whatever might be the claims of the bondholders, that much of the doings of the revolutionary faction in Spain should have found favour in his eyes.

Of this the opposition took advantage. They insisted upon it that the French aggressors had only been encouraged to go to extremities by the evidently lukewarm feeling of the British government towards the Spanish liberals; and the manifest resolution of Lord Liverpool and his colleagues not to go to war with France, they attributed to the same cause. That the wiser portion of the opposition could believe this, it is difficult to think: but it suited them to say so; nor did it suit their opponents very pointedly to deny it. Thus, during the violent debates in the House of Commons which ensued, the true reasons of the audacity of Villele and Chateaubriand, and of the backwardness of Lord

Liverpool and his colleagues, were never once glanced at; and upon Mr Canning and Mr Peel, who constituted their strength in the House, it devolved to make the best defence they could, without allusion to those reasons.

The subject was brought before the House of Commons by Mr Macdonald on the 28th April 1823, in pursuance of notice given; but already some curious discussions had taken place, and some curious admissions been made, on the occasion of laying upon the table of the House the papers connected with the negotiations that had occurred. In the course of these discussions, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr Canning, had admitted that the objects of France were manifold. That the revolutionary proceedings of the Spanish liberals, and the durance in which the king was held, were highly offensive to France, could not be doubted; nor did any one doubt that the wish of her rulers was to alter in some way this position of affairs. But France had further designs. It became evident that she meant to interfere betwixt Spain and her revolted colonies, with which a hopeless struggle still went on; and that she hoped to obtain a part of these rich and valuable colonies, either as the price of assistance in reconquering them, or as the price of non-interference with Spain herself. This was admitted by the Secretary for Foreign Affairs when the papers upon which Mr Macdonald's motion was based were laid upon the table; and whilst doing this he proclaimed, amid the cheers of both sides of the House, that England would never consent to French interference with countries "now *de facto* independent,"

though not yet formally acknowledged as sovereign states by Europe. This sally, though admirably calculated for the moment *ad captandum*, really added in the recoil to the difficulty of the position; for whilst the Secretary was thus virtually proclaiming, as far as in him lay, the independence of the Mexican and other transatlantic republics, the question returned with redoubled force, Why not then resist by force and arms this commencement of interference exercised upon an independent power in Europe?

In this prolonged debate Mr Peel spoke in defence of the neutrality advocated by the cabinet before Mr Canning, and his address was, as usual, clever at once and cautious, moderated in its tone, and sparing in its admissions. The speech was ostensibly an answer to one by Sir James Macintosh, who strongly insisted on the loss of character and of moral influence which Great Britain must sustain if she did not in some way stop this attack upon the independence of an ally for whom she had already expended so much blood and treasure. In effect, however, Mr Peel went into a defence of the entire position of government, but without going beyond that. Mr Peel's position was, that the real question was this: "Did the honour of the country—and if the honour, did the interests of the country—render it necessary that we should become a party to the war?" To this twofold question he replied *seriatim*: "Did the honour of the country require of us war? He boldly answered, No! Did the interests of the country require this? He again would boldly answer, No! Did the faith of treaties require it? Once

more he boldly answered, No! Did the voice of the people of England call for it? Again he boldly answered, No! Did the government of Spain require it? Again and again he answered, No! Since, then, neither the government of Spain, nor the voice of the English people, nor the faith of treaties, nor the interests of the country, required of us war, was there any reason, he must ask, to criminate his Majesty's ministers?"

In his endeavours to prove these distinct assertions, the right honourable gentleman was not always happy. He admitted that the aggression of France upon the liberties of Spain was unprincipled, and he called it so amid loud cheers from the opposition; but he argued that France herself would be the greatest sufferer by the act. A military occupation of Spain would cause weakness and not strength, and thus be, as in the case of Napoleon, its own punishment. Mr Peel went on to deny that either the cases of Queen Elizabeth, who interfered in behalf of the Flemings, or of the late government, which interfered to resist a bitter enemy in Napoleon, were cases in point. He contended that England had no interest in this war, no direct interest; whilst her indirect interest was only that of other countries of Europe, who were equally concerned in a moral view. In his argument that the Spanish government did not so interpret treaties as to hold that Great Britain was bound to declare war, the right honourable secretary was much less happy. The language of M. de San Miguel, the Spanish minister, as quoted by Mr Peel, was to this effect:—"To England, who has taken in the conferences at Verona so moder-

ate and pacific a line, it now belongs to crown the work, *and to prevent any effusion of blood*, which can be productive of no possible advantage to the interests of any nation." These expressions Mr Peel interpreted as alluding to mediation only; but this meaning they cannot strictly bear. The Spaniard calls upon Great Britain to "stop" the effusion of blood. In the abstract, this *might* mean by mediation; but it *might* also mean by a conditional declaration of hostilities; and this no doubt the Spanish minister intended to be its meaning.

It was then evident that France would not withdraw from her position unless forced to do so; nor Spain from hers unless forced to do so. How then could England prevent a collision except by an armed interference? Had the English ministers told MM. de Villele and Chateaubriand, "You shall have two nations to fight, if fight you will," they would have probably drawn back; but it was evident from the first that the French ruler acted upon the conviction that this step on their part was out of the question; and hence, in spite of the condemnation of all parties in England, including Mr Peel himself, he persevered, to the astonishment of all Europe. In fact, the conclusion of the Secretary's speech turned upon the distinction that a war in defence of Spain on the part of Great Britain, however just and honourable it might be, was not convenient, and must be avoided whether Spain wished it or did not wish it. "The policy of neutrality (he said) was that which England ought to pursue, and which would

maintain for her that peace which, though not *perhaps* essential to her *existence*, yet, after the derangement of her internal affairs, and the sufferings consequent on a war of twenty-five years' duration, was the system which it was infinitely best for the country to adopt."

The speech of the Foreign Secretary, Mr Canning, was, as usual, sprightly and ingenious, but, as might be expected from his pliancy and lubricity of character, more time-serving than that of Mr Peel. The Home Secretary throughout sternly refused to justify or excuse the insolent aggression of the Bourbon government. The Foreign Secretary almost defended it. In short, he laughed at the idea of going to war for a set of people who hesitated, as he expressed it, "to fill up a blank in their constitution" by an alteration in the elective franchise; a mode of dealing with the question which almost amounted to a justification of the French proceedings, inasmuch as it could not be very wrong in Louis the Eighteenth to demand that which it would have been perfectly laudable in Spain to have conceded. Mr Macdonald's motion for an address blaming the ministry for not aiding Spain was of course negatived; the majority of the House no doubt feeling that the occasion would not justify the tremendous risk of a war under the existing circumstances. The result justified, at all events, the discreetness of the decision. The Duke d'Angoulême, at the head of one hundred thousand veterans of Napoleon, commanded by generals tried in a hundred battles, entered Spain. It soon became clear that a majority of the people of the peninsula were indifferent

to the catastrophe. Excepting in the larger towns, the liberals had lost all hold on the attachment of the people. Scarcely a show of resistance was made. The Cortes, in despair, shut themselves up in the city of Cadiz, and, assisted by some English volunteers, prepared for a defence to the last. The threat of bombarding the city, however, soon induced a surrender. The Cortes were contemptuously dispersed; the English volunteers, as contemptuously, allowed, after proving themselves British subjects, to return homewards; and Ferdinand the Seventh was reinstated in arbitrary insignificance, as harmless to the Spanish people as contemptible in himself. At this point this extraordinary expedition ended. That the French government did not prosecute their undoubted views of a re-conquest of Peru and Mexico must probably be attributed to the knowledge that the United States, now a powerful confederation, and in naval means second only to Great Britain, would not permit such interference; and that in this determination the principle laid down by President Munro would be, covertly if not openly, upheld by British assistance. Nor is it probable that either Austria or Russia wished to see these rich colonies in the power of France. As a field of commerce and a mine of wealth, they might have too much augmented a power which, though for the moment subservient, they felt was still to be dreaded as the powder-magazine of all Europe.

It would be in vain to affect to believe that this really final demolition of British influence in that peninsula which she had helped to rescue from the giant

clutch of Napoleon, was not deeply felt by the rulers as well as the people of Great Britain. That it was so felt by Mr Canning, his conduct, during his brief tenure of power, shortly afterwards amply demonstrated. Upon the whole, the event helped still further to weaken an administration already upon the verge of dissolution, unless some change of circumstances should occur to infuse new spirit into it. The Catholic question, in spite of the known repugnance of George the Fourth, was visibly advancing towards success; and was only staved off from session to session, more in consequence of disagreements amongst its friends than by the political power of its enemies. It had already become an open question (as it is termed) in the cabinet; and when this takes place, the event only becomes a question of time; for when a ministry is divided upon any great question, it is only because it has become impossible to form an administration not so divided,—an evil so vast and permanent, as to ensure an escape from it in the only way then practicable. That Mr Peel was becoming aware of this truth, his after-conduct renders sufficiently probable. For the present, his opposition was decided in tone, but qualified in reality. The other events of the year were of minor importance. The small-note act had not had time to produce the consequence which, had those who passed it understood it, they might have easily anticipated. The nation still rang with complaints of low prices and diminished demand; and the gloom produced by these difficulties the unsatisfactory scene in Spain only helped to deepen.

CHAPTER VII.

Effects of the Small-Note Respite Act—Reaction and Higher Prices—Royal Speech of 1824—Mr Robinson Chancellor of Exchequer—His imprudent Financial Boasts—The Economists silent—Mr Peel's Caution—Vast Speculations—Loans to the revolted Spanish Colonies—Mr Canning sends out Consuls—Growth of the American Trade—French Scheme for settling the Spanish Colonies—Rejected peremptorily by the Liverpool Cabinet—Mr Peel's Alien Act—Mr Canning prepares to recognise the new Republics—Catholic Association—Sir F. Burdett moves for a Committee on their Claims—Supported by Canning and Croker—Mr Peel opposes it—Emancipation carried by the Commons—Symptoms of Monetary Difficulty—Danger of a Crisis—Its Causes—Exchanges adverse and a Demand for Gold—Mr Jones of Bristol's Petition—Mr Peel's Tactics—Parliament prorogued.

It has been seen that the sessions of 1822 and 1823 had been got through amidst complaints of diminished demand for commodities, low prices, and national pressure; and that at length, about the middle of the summer of 1822, the small-note act had been passed, accompanied by the extraordinary declaration from Lord Liverpool that he did not expect from it any effect upon prices, or any amelioration of the distress then pervading both agriculture and commerce, which distress, as he attributed it to other than currency causes, he expected to be cured by means unconnected with alterations in the monetary system. If Lord

Liverpool told the truth, it seems beyond the power of imagination to conceive why the small-note act of 1822 became law at all. If he did not expect this from it, then the question recurs, with force irresistible, what did he expect from it, or why was it passed? At the instance of the Economist party it was certainly not passed. They suffered it to pass *sub silentio;* but they never advocated it. Supposing, therefore, Lord Liverpool to have spoken the truth, the enactment remains an inscrutable mystery. It seems an alteration, for no purpose expressed nor for any conceivable if judged by Lord Liverpool's statement, of one of the most important acts ever passed by a legislature. Nothing could exceed the solemnity of that enactment. The Speaker of the House of Commons and the Prince Regent congratulated each other upon the unanimity with which it was agreed to. Yet upon the eve of its going into full effect, one of its most important provisions is repealed by the Liverpool administration, accompanied by a declaration from the Prime Minister that he does not expect from it any effect either on agriculture or trade, and without the slightest hint of any other expectation of any sort connected with it.

If Lord Liverpool's expectations in 1823 were of this negative description, he must, in 1824, have begun to be agreeably disappointed. Parliament was opened on the 3d February, and instead of the tables of both Houses being laden with petitions of complaint and remonstrance, the speech from the throne congratulated the Houses on the prosperous condition of the country; and the movers and seconders of

the addresses from both, in answer to the royal speech, echoed the same gratulation, and boasted of the elasticity and powers of revival now exhibited by agriculture as well as by trade. Nor was this strain of gratulation unsupported by facts; although of the remoter causes of these appearances, as events afterwards amply demonstrated, great ignorance prevailed. In truth, the powerful expression of Horace,

> "———— Incedis per ignes,
> Suppositos cineri doloso ——,"

was now applicable to the legislature, which, without knowing it, was now loading a mine under its own feet, the explosion of which was fated in no long time almost to shatter to fragments the entire system of government. The small-note act of 1823 had been passed with what may be called a remarkable absence of remark by both Houses of Parliament. It was tacitly assented to, and that was all. No turnpike bill could have gone through the legislature with fewer marks of attention or apparent significance. But it was not so received by the country; nor was it so received by the bankers. As soon as the enactment of the small-note respite bill into a law became known to the latter, they deemed it in reality the intention of the government to continue without limitation the issue of the smaller denominations of bank-notes. The act gave a respite of eleven years to bank-notes for sums below five pounds, being passed in the middle of the year 1822, and its effect being to postpone, for ten years from and after May 1,

1823, the suppression of this portion of the paper circulation; but the universal belief was, both on the part of the country bankers and their customers, that the act would be renewed for periods of greater or less extent, and that the respite was virtually a reprieve for all future time. The measure therefore soon became popular with the community, who expected from it nothing but what was pleasant; and, as time went on, this impression strengthened apace.

Mr James, the member for Carlisle, had indeed ascertained that the act of 1822 did not affect that portion of the act of 1819, which enacted the future convertibility of all paper securities into gold and silver "on demand;" but of this the banking community made light; nor did anything drop from the Economists to show that *they* apprehended danger from the continuance of this liability in conjunction with unlimited issues of all denominations of bank-notes. The country banker, knowing that the same sacrifice of capital which enabled him to keep a reserve in Bank of England notes would enable him to keep the same amount in gold, was contented with his position. Neither he nor his customers seem to have in the least apprehended a state of things arising out of their future unlimited speculations, which, at the same time that it rendered more gold necessary to the safety of the banker, would bring about an almost impossibility of obtaining it. The consequence of this state of public opinion was a sort of paper millennium, over which nobody apprehended that any catastrophe was impending. The merchant went on

speculating, and the banker discounting, with a feeling of perfect security, whilst every fresh issue of notes, by acting upon prices, gave rise to more speculation and further issues. To such a result as this the preservation of the bank-notes for sums as low as one pound was peculiarly favourable. In cases of over-issue of a currency, if such extra-issue be composed of notes only of the higher denominations, an additional quantity of gold and silver coins is required to be also in circulation, in order to support retail prices, upon which wholesale prices depend. These coins, where notes of smaller denominations are absent, bankers do not supply in sufficient quantities to support retail prices at the requisite level upon all commodities, and hence speculation becomes crippled and often fails. When notes for one pound are freely circulated, however, the reverse happens. Bankers are readily induced to supply the requisite addition of silver coins to support prices in retail; and thus the whole currency slowly bloats itself out like a balloon, and becomes depreciated in comparison with other currencies of other nations in the *ratio* of the quantity added, the depreciation being indicated by a general advance in prices, for which no other reason can be assigned than this surplus of circulating money.

In this position were the monetary affairs of the country when parliament was opened for the session of the year 1824. More than eighteen months had elapsed since the passing of the small-note respite act, and during this interval the country bankers had gone on freely discounting and adding to their cir-

culation week by week. The directors alone of the Bank of England, luckily for themselves, declined to avail themselves of the permission to circulate notes for sums under five pounds; but, beyond this, they did nothing to stop the rage for speculation which the permission accorded to the country banks was now beginning to excite. During the earlier months of the year 1823, prices had not been much affected, and the complaints of stagnation and depression were still loud; but the seasons of 1823 being less favourable than those of 1822, both for grazing and tillage, wheat and live stock began to advance in the autumn of that year, and that advance, once begun, went steadily forward, helped onwards by the added issues of bank-notes. This tendency to advance very naturally communicated itself to other commodities. Colonial produce of various descriptions, wool, cotton, and other articles of commerce, became successively objects of speculation, so that, on the opening of parliament in February 1824, both trade and agriculture were in a state of great briskness; and as the money depreciated and prices rose, great apparent and great real profits were obtained in many markets.

That the public, generally, should attribute these flattering appearances to some mysterious elasticity in the industry of the country, and look no further, is no matter for wonder. Men, busily engaged in the pursuits of agriculture and commerce, cannot be expected to look beneath the surface, or seek for occult causes of effects which are sufficiently patent. Every speculation is based upon some alleged commercial

ground; and if the results answer, or more than answer, the anticipations indulged, men naturally rest content and are satisfied. Neither is it possible that bankers should control the instrument thus put into their hands, supposing them even to understand, which few indeed do, its working and effects. Country bankers, like tradesmen, are in competition with each other: and that banker would be deemed a madman who, lest he should depreciate the currency, should refuse to discount a bill based upon a regular transaction by solvent parties, which bill would (as he must well know) be discounted gladly by his rivals. Hence, under the circumstances described, the issues of paper, the consequent speculation, and the constant rise in prices, progressed unavoidably; and the public, as unavoidably, was deceived by these appearances to attribute the whole to some mysterious prosperity which no one could explain. That the ministers of the country should be so deceived was, however, less excusable.

The responsible office of Chancellor of Exchequer was, at this time, filled by the Right Hon. Frederick Robinson; of whom it is not too much to say that he was at any time unfit for such a position, but especially so in such times as those which are now to be described. He was, in short, a person of little ability and less nerve: for both of which a chancellor of exchequer had great need during the period at which this narrative has now arrived. It would be perhaps going too far to impute much blame to a minister in Mr Robinson's position, for availing himself somewhat of the seem-

ing tide of national well-being which had now set in. It was only natural that he should do this. Had the Chancellor of Exchequer possessed the slightest tincture of that knowledge without which no man ought to fill such a place, he would have had misgivings enough as to the hollowness of the speculative rise in prices then in progress, to have made him cautious either of boasting of the past or glorifying the future. On this occasion no such fears seem to have passed even momentarily over the mind of the right honourable gentleman. An ordinary merchant, with only ordinary mercantile lore to guide him, would have exercised more sagacity than did the Chancellor of Exchequer on this memorable occasion; and, if the conduct of Mr Robinson is to be taken as the index of the feelings of the administration, no parcel of children turned loose into a powder-magazine could exhibit less knowledge of the nature of the combustibles with which they were surrounded.

This extraordinary exhibition took place on the 23d February, when the financial position of the country for the current year, 1824, was detailed by the Chancellor of Exchequer to the House of Commons, and exposition of the financial revenues, intended to be adopted, was given. Of these was put first a reduction of the interest of that portion of the debt called the "four per cents," from its bearing interest at that rate. Of this kind of stock it was stated there were seventy-five millions: and the intention was either to compel the holders of these millions to take three and a-half instead of four per cent.,

or to pay off such as refused. Nor was this a difficult matter in the existing state of money affairs. Amongst the other consequences of the respite of the small notes and consequent issues of the bankers, was a gradual reduction in the interest of money, which had now become so plentiful that, in spite of the many schemes for employing it, there was a difficulty in finding investments for capital. Of this plethora of money the Chancellor took advantage, and boldly offered to pay off any obstinate holders of four per cents that refused to take his three and a-half as tendered; knowing that he could easily borrow at three and a-half per cent. money enough to pay off any number of holders who might prove unmanageable. After enunciating this scheme, and naming to the House some duties which he intended to reduce or repeal, the right honourable gentleman wound up the whole with the following magniloquent effusion :—

"It must be highly gratifying to the feelings of the House to know that the country is at this moment in such a state of prosperity. We see our country daily growing in wealth, power, and influence. In wealth—the result of sound policy and considerate legislation. In power—not abused for the selfish purposes of ambition and aggrandizement, but prompt enough to vindicate the national honour, and strong enough to uphold the national security. In influence—not arising from petty intrigues or blustering dictation, but from the conviction entertained by other nations of the sincerity of our professions and the honesty of our conduct—a conviction which makes them feel that the wealth, the power, and the influence of which we are so justly proud may be regarded as the tests of steady friendship, and not as the menacing instruments of hostility and

rivalry. Sir, I am not arrogant enough to claim for his Majesty's government, still less for myself, the merit of having brought the country into this happy condition. There are many others who are entitled to share that merit with us. I claim it—not for individuals—but for parliament;—for that calumniated that vilified parliament, which we were told was so essentially vicious in its nature and construction, that it was utterly impossible for it to extricate the kingdom from the depression and distress in which it was recently placed. We were confidently told—how truly the result has shown—that in parliament there was nothing good; that its counsels were venal, its members corrupt; in short, that unless all were at once turned topsy-turvy and a new system of representation established, it was impossible that parliament could contribute to raise the nation from its difficulties and relieve it from its distress. We now see the best, because the practical, refutation of this calumny (as I must always consider it) on the constitution, in the improved state of the country. Parliament may now contemplate, with proud satisfaction, the result of its own labours. It may look around on the face of the country smiling in plenty, and animated with, what I hope soon to see, unrestricted industry. It beholds comfort and content, prosperity and order, going hand in hand, and dispensing, from the portals of an ancient constitutional monarchy, all their inestimable blessings amongst a happy, a united and (let us never forget) a grateful people!"

It is difficult to say which part of this most ill-judged and rash address—which (strange to say) was received with loud cheers—deserves to be most admired. During the preceding years, when the table of the House was covered with petitions all complaining of intolerable distress, the language of ministers and their supporters was that the suffering was due

to causes "beyond the control of parliament." Yet here the Chancellor of the Exchequer claims for parliament the whole merit of the rise in prices and of the consequent ease that followed the small-note act of 1822. That the small-note respite act was the cause of all that followed, few men of understanding doubted; but then comes the unfortunate recollection that Lord Liverpool had, in 1822, expressly disclaimed all idea of the commerce or agriculture of the country being in anywise altered by it, if passed. The most unhappy feature of the speech is, however, the unhesitating confidence in the stability of all this fictitious prosperity which it exhibits. The Chancellor talks as if something better than a millennium for farmers and merchants had arrived, to which there was to be no end: nor was a single word said by any member to moderate the confident tone so rashly adopted. It is significant enough, however, that none of the prominent members of the Economist party appear in the debate. Mr Peel, the chairman of the committee of 1819, was silent, nor did the Economist party say anything. It is only justice to them, therefore, to suppose that they had misgivings as to the event, ultimately, of all that was passing, and wisely abstained accordingly from any appearance of joining in the pæans so triumphantly chanted by the unlucky Chancellor of Exchequer. They must have felt that this triumph was one really based upon a violation of the principles of the act of 1819; and they must have instinctively felt, at the same time, that this second depreciation of the currency could not go on for ever

in company with a liability to pay all these notes, on demand, in gold and silver. Be this as it may, however, and whether it be the truth or not that such misgivings existed within the House, they certainly existed out of doors, and in some cases assumed a shape stronger than that of mere doubt. Amongst other dissentients, the author of the Political Register again grappled with the question; and in his wonted fearless and confident manner, in a letter addressed to "Mr Prosperity Robinson," assured the unfortunate Chancellor that the rise in prices, and consequent amelioration of the effects of taxation, upon which he so prided himself, rested on an unsound basis; that the depreciation of the current money, which caused it, must end in a monetary crisis and panic; and that, within eighteen months, the entire fabric of paper would be blown up, and a fall of prices as rapid, and ruin as widely spread, ensue. This was no doubt the conclusion at which a few sagacious and intelligent minds were even at this period arriving: but by the public generally the prediction was laughed at, as a piece of political rhodomontade, recklessly ventured and petulantly uttered. No ordinary optics could detect a cloud in the commercial horizon; and men smiled accordingly, and apprehended no further.

Under this temporary sunshine, the parliamentary year of 1824 passed over with comparative smoothness and tranquillity. Amongst the host of commercial speculations which now appeared upon the commercial arena, stimulated into life by the plenti-

fulness of money and the cupidity of bankers and brokers of every sort, were foremost schemes for opening out a trade with revolted Spanish colonies, the resources of which were inordinately exaggerated by all whose desire it was to profit by such schemes.

The cabinet, smarting under the sense of humiliation inflicted by the insult of the French occupation of Spain, and the forcible overthrow of British influence in that country, were not slow, under the inspiration of Mr Canning, to take advantage of any circumstances that favoured retaliation. Although a formal act of recognition of the independence of the new Spanish American republican states was thus far avoided, yet consuls were appointed, and of course accredited, to the *de facto* authorities of the new republics; and these acts of amity and half-recognition soon gave rise to a speculative trade with, and the negotiation of loans to, these unsettled countries, out of which losses enormous were soon to arise. That the French government were vexed and mortified by these attempts on the part of Lord Liverpool's cabinet to countenance, consolidate, and give resources to these revolted colonies, torn as they were by factions, and unfit for self-government, was soon made evident in the negotiations that followed. The French ambassador at this period was the afterwards too notorious M. de Polignac, whose aim it appeared to be to drive Great Britain into a conference with the other powers for the settlement of the Spanish colonies. The ostensible purpose of this mode was, to make the erection of a monarchy in these provinces the price of their ostensible inde-

pendence. The real object probably was to give them a prince who should lean upon France, and make Peru and Mexico virtually French dependencies. This absurd project, which was quite worthy of its advocate, the Liverpool cabinet cavalierly enough rejected —Mr Canning stating, in reply to de Polignac,—who had described these fine countries as "ruined by absurd and dangerous theories, and a prey to mere anarchy," and who had said, that "to recognise them as republics was merely recognising anarchy,"—that, "however desirable the establishment of a monarchical form of government might be on one hand, and whatever might be the difficulties of doing it on the other, he could not discuss; but he could only say that the British government would not undertake to put forward any such establishment of any such form as a condition of recognition." This was at once a slap in the face for MM. Villele and de Polignac, and an avowal that Great Britain was determined to let no monarchical theory embarrass the ways of commerce, which, after this declaration, went on with these provinces at a rate more than commensurate with prudence.

The remainder of the session passed over without any event of material consequence occurring to mar the universal quietude of the time. Mr Secretary Peel indeed introduced an alien bill, which was bitterly opposed by Mr Hobhouse and others, upon the ground that it proposed to further the arbitrary designs of the Holy Alliance, and defended by its proposer as being absolutely necessary to check the dangerous machinations of refugees in England against governments who were

our allies. The opposition, although carried on with a warmth that verged sometimes upon bitterness, was futile, however, and the act was ultimately passed by a large majority. The other business of the session was for the most part that of routine; for that the Insurrection Act for unhappy Ireland should be renewed for another year, however it might be lamented by some, was at all events no theme for wonder as unusual. Another attempt was made in June to push the administration into a recognition of the independence of the revolted colonies of Spain; and on a petition for that recognition being presented by Sir James Mackintosh, a smart debate took place, in which, although government did not admit themselves to be prepared at the moment to entertain the prayer of the petition, an avowal was made by Mr Canning, that, if he and his colleagues should deem it proper to advise his Majesty to recognise these states, that advice should be given without the slightest reference to the opinions or wishes of any other government whatsoever.

The result of the session was, that at its close the administration, of which Mr Peel was now a prominent member, was, in the eyes of all, stronger than at its commencement. That this was mainly to be ascribed to the change made in the currency of the country, no one now doubts; but in 1824, this opinion was far from being general. The majority ascribed the difference, felt and acknowledged by all, to some mysterious change in the social circumstances of the country, which no one could undertake to explain. The few who disbelieved, or doubted, looked on in silence

for the most part, and left it to time to establish or dissipate a notion too cabalistical to be credited, but too indefinite to be refuted.

The parliamentary session of 1825, which opened on the 3d February, began under the same general auspices as that of the preceding year. The artificial stimulus given both to trade and agriculture yet continued, and increased hour by hour, and of this excitement the administration reaped the temporary benefit. The debility arising, however, from a cabinet division upon a question so searching as that of the claims of the Catholics, still continued, and of this the opposition again began to avail themselves. Henry Grattan, their unwearied advocate, and one of the few Irish patriots who, to powerful eloquence and great general ability, may be said to have united prudence, consistency, and sincerity, was now removed from the troublous scene. Mr O'Connell, a man admirably fitted by nature for the character of agitator on this vexed question, was now the undisputed guide of the Catholic Association, a body daily acquiring numbers, power, and influence; and at the instance of the Association, the question was once more to be made prominent by its advocates in the British parliament. With a ministry divided upon the subject, with an association in Ireland which, in power and extent, bid fair to exceed all former bodies associated for the Catholic cause, and with a growing opinion in England that the claims of the Catholics could not possibly be resisted much longer, the agitation of this question now became a serious matter, and great alarm began to be

felt by those whose opposition was sincere, and whose repugnance was founded upon the full persuasion that the papist would never really tolerate any one who differed from him, and that the power of a papist priesthood must inevitably involve ultimate persecution or ultimate civil strife. Such were the feelings of the anti-catholic party at the opening of the session of 1825, and these feelings were soon expressed in a very remarkable manner.

The Liverpool and Eldon part of the cabinet had prevailed so far as to insert in the King's speech, on the opening of parliament, a direct censure of the proceedings of the Catholic Association, now animated by the energetic zeal and enthusiastic eloquence of Mr O'Connell. The paragraph embodying this censure was as follows:— "Industry and commercial enterprise are extending themselves in that part of the United Kingdom. It is therefore the more to be regretted that associations should exist in Ireland which have adopted proceedings irreconcilable with the spirit of the constitution, and calculated, by exciting alarm and by exasperating animosities, to endanger the peace of society, and to retard the course of national improvement." The allegations here embodied are sufficiently vague, but they indicate, as plainly as a more definite charge could have done, the determination of the Protestant party to resist all further concessions, and maintain their existing position. The Catholics on their part, seeing now success before them, and perhaps at no great distance, were just as resolute and equally uncompromising. They repudiated all securities and all conditions, and de-

manded an absolute emancipation, unclogged by precautions, or none at all. When, therefore, Sir Francis Burdett, who had now become the expositor in the House of Commons of the views and plans of the Catholic Association, gave notice of a motion for a committee to consider the claims of the Catholics, with a view to a final settlement of the question, it was felt that the struggle would be a desperate one, and that a great Catholic victory in the Lower House might now imperil the question in the Lords, who had hitherto resisted by large majorities all attempts to emancipate the Catholics.

The motion of Sir Francis Burdett for a committee came before the House of Commons on the 25th of February 1825, and was prefaced by a speech, moderate in expression, but sufficiently comprehensive in its demands. The honourable baronet argued for the Catholics upon the broad ground that, unless some reason of overpowering force to the contrary could be adduced, the Catholic had a natural right to equality of privilege with other subjects. At any danger, however, from an unconditional emancipation, he laughed. Supposing these religionists to have the wish, which he denied, to innovate upon the British constitution and subvert the church establishment, he asked whence could they possibly derive power? The great majority were Protestants. Those who differed most agreed in opposing them. What then must be the result of a repeal of these laws, which were a disgrace to the Protestant principle? Nothing but the admission of some half dozen very worthy old gentle-

men into the Upper House, and a score or two of the lesser Catholic gentry into the Commons. To call that dangerous, Sir Francis declared was a farce; but danger enough, he argued, arose out of this suicidal system of exclusion—of the exclusion of the majority of the Irish nation from the ordinary privileges and rights of all subjects of a free government.

"Can any man, sir (asked Sir Francis Burdett), repress his astonishment—can he account on any principle short of miracle—for the facts, when he reviews the hair-breadth escapes out of which England, during the late war, happily got with regard to Ireland? Had, sir, the French fleet which anchored in Bantry Bay been successful to a certain extent—had it not so turned out, that the commander-in-chief was separated from his own forces,—had it so happened that the second in command had possessed enterprise enough to land—Ireland was gone; and the sun of England must, I fear, have set in eternal night. The failure of that attempt upon Ireland can only be attributed to the most extraordinary ignorance of the enemy with regard to the temper and spirit of the people of Ireland. But, sir, we must not presume upon our good fortune; for the ignorance which then alone saved us exists no longer. Since that period the continental powers have had extensive intercourse with us; and I say distinctly that they are casting many an anxious eye at Ireland." Sir Francis concluded a certainly telling speech by enlarging upon the expensiveness of the system of exclusion, which alone, he protested, caused Great

Britain to keep thirty thousand troops, and another army of yeomanry and armed police, in that unhappy country.

The motion of Sir Francis Burdett was seconded by Mr Croker, who, at the same time, said that he would not vote for any bill of emancipation which did not, at the same time, provide for the Roman-catholic clergy. Sir Francis Burdett was supported by Mr Canning, who, on plea of illness, spoke very briefly; and by Mr Plunkett, who spoke at great length, declaring also for a provision for the Catholic priesthood; but denying that either they or the laity of that religion had the slightest wish to attack the property of the Irish Establishment. To the lot of Mr Secretary Peel it fell to reply to Mr Plunkett; and on this occasion he clearly exerted himself to the uttermost. Mr Peel commenced, as usual, with the historical part of the question. He denied that the existing Catholic disabilities were any infraction of the treaty of Limerick, as some still pretended. That treaty, he said, protected from molestation any Romanist who would take the oath of allegiance, but gave him no right to fill any office. Nor did the advocates of liberal dealings towards Catholics, a century back, even recognise or dream of any such natural rights as are now set up to be argued for. When the act of union with Scotland was arranged, did the statesmen who prepared that great and successful measure talk of any "natural rights" of this sort? Not they; on the contrary that very act excludes Roman-catholics, *permanently* and in *perpetuity*, from

certain offices; this exclusion being full, complete, and unconditional." If there were any natural rights to offices (Mr Peel argued), all subjects without exception must have the natural right to represent, if chosen, their fellow-subjects in that House. That followed as an inevitable consequence. Yet all men who had not £300 per annum arising out of property were excluded; and who ever deemed this a *moral wrong*, though some deemed it an impolitic arrangement? The right honourable secretary then argued the question on grounds of policy:—

"I must own (said Mr Peel) that if I could be perfectly satisfied that concession *would* tend to the restoration of peace and harmony;—if I thought that it *would* end animosities, the existence of which we all lament, then I admit that I, for one, would no longer oppose concession on *a mere theory* of the constitution, when consent would procure such immense practical advantages (hear, hear, hear.) But because I doubt whether the removal of disabilities, on the conditions proposed, will at all promote tranquillity or lessen religious animosity in Ireland; and also because I think you cannot safely even remove the disabilities, I am disposed to continue the exclusion. * * * * * How happens it that the partial removal of former disabilities has *not* been attended with any benefit? In 1792 the Catholics came forward and asked to be rendered capable of holding the office of magistrate and of exercising the elective franchise. Well, they wanted then, they said, nothing more, and those who said they did, grossly maligned them. What followed? The franchise was granted, even more fully than they requested it, and Roman-catholics were permitted to serve as well on grand as on petit juries. Since these concessions, has there been, I ask, any diminution of party-feeling or religious animosity? Do the Protestants and the Catholics

live upon better terms than before? I think not (hear, hear.) The answer is from the supporters of the proposal before the House: 'While you retain anything—while you refuse to put the parties upon an entire equality, the evil will continue. As soon as they are equal it will cease.' Admitting this, for the sake of argument, for a moment, the question comes, *Will* the concessions now claimed produce that equality? That which is claimed is a mere capacity or eligibility for office; after that is granted, will you be able to concede what the Roman-catholics will consider *a just distribution of office?*"

Mr Peel then went on to demonstrate the difficulties under which both the crown and the Catholic body must feel themselves, in the event of Catholics being eligible to the highest offices of the state; forgetting, however, to state, that the same objection applies with a force nearly equal to the Presbyterian.

"Let us suppose (said Mr Peel) an individual Catholic to come into this House, sincerely attached to the faith in which he has been educated. He has all the influence which personal character and ability can give him; and he is placed at the head of a party. Is the crown to say, 'Although you are a man of powerful abilities, yet I must shut you out?' You have capacitated him to become Secretary of State, or First Lord of the Treasury. Is the crown to turn round and say, 'I cannot admit you? Is *that* the way to conciliate such a man? hear, hear.) Then suppose, sir, the crown does employ him in its service, in what situation do you place him? Can he exercise a sound discretion in regard to those measures which regard the safety of the Church of England? It appears to me that such a man *cannot* give a safe judgment. Therefore I am for excluding him, and not throwing the *onus* upon the crown of refusing the ticket of admission that you have given him."

Mr Peel then proceeded to assert that the doctrines and pretensions of the Church of Rome were just as intolerant and arbitrary as they were in mediæval times. Individuals amongst them, he argued, might profess liberal opinions, and in this country escape sacerdotal censure; but the documents put forth by the papal authority he insisted were as bad as in the worst times of papal domination.

"Am I to be told, sir (continued Mr Peel), that I am insulting the professors of this faith, if I admit that I view the tenets of such a religion with distrust? I reply, I have a right to look at the influence it exercises over the minds of men; and I do say, that I view with the greatest jealousy the readmission of Catholics to office. It is most extraordinary that we should be taunted in this way now, seeing that, up to this hour of the debate, we have not heard one word of those securities which used to form so large a part of Catholic professions. * * * * When I am told that the nature of the Catholic religion is changed, I must say, after a pretty accurate review of what is passing in Ireland, (and I say it in no unfriendly spirit), that that church would have consulted its dignity much better if it had avoided several publications which have appeared.

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"I will read an extract from a book signed 'J. K. L.', said to be written by Dr Doyle, being a communication to the whole Roman-catholic communion of Ireland of the rescript of Leo XII., the present pope, addressed to the bishops and others, complaining of the mischiefs effected by Bible-societies, and containing this passage:—'The power of temporal princes will, we trust in the Lord, come to your assistance, whose interests, as experience shows, are always concerned when yours are in danger; for it never hath happened that the things which are

Cæsar's are given to Cæsar, if the things which are God's be not given to God.' Now, a letter of this kind, talking of the temporal power of princes coming in to suppress Bible-associations, appears to me to hold out a doctrine as monstrous as can well be maintained (hear.) If there were anything wanting which should call upon me to express my decided opposition to the claims of the Catholics, it would be the admission of letters of this sort, published by the authority of the Roman-catholics of Ireland, and containing passages of a description such as this is."

The right honourable Secretary concluded by saying he was opposed to the principle of the motion before the House, and should, as he had heretofore done, vote against it. Notwithstanding the efforts of the ministry, and the little support given to Sir Francis Burdett by Canning, who spoke feebly and briefly, the motion was carried by 247 against 234, the majority being 13, a result which was received with vast exultation by the enemies of the ministers, as well as by the advocates of the Catholics.

That the result of this division had greatly alarmed the exclusionist party, was soon proved by that which followed. It seemed to be now felt that an effort must be made to act upon public opinion out of doors, and to encourage the House of Peers, upon whom whatever odium might accrue from the rejection of the Catholic claims must now fall. That public opinion out of doors was quite divided upon the question, could not be denied for a moment. The great majority of the established clergy both of England and Scotland were strongly opposed to concession. Amongst the dissenting ministry, both the Methodists and Presby-

terian Independents were as adverse as the clergy of either establishment. The Unitarian ministers were generally favourable to emancipation, nor were the Quakers generally hostile to it. Amongst the laity of all persuasions there was much more difference of opinion. The Universities were hostile; but amongst the better educated classes, not directly connected with Oxford or Cambridge, great numbers were advocates of Catholic equality; and the active whigs and radical reformers, who now began to be numerous, took the same side, partly from a dislike to any exclusive principles on account of opinion, and partly from a desire to upset the administration, which they all detested. With the majority of the Commons' House in their favour, and with a large portion of the periodical press and the most active politicians out of doors exerting themselves in their behalf, the Catholics began to look upon the victory as virtually gained, whilst a proportionate alarm began to manifest itself amongst the anti-catholic supporters of government. It was felt, therefore, to be necessary that public opinion should be in some way excited on that side of the question, and this was effected after a very unexpected fashion soon afterwards.

On the 25th of April, the Duke of York, the King's eldest brother, appeared in his place in the House of Peers, ostensibly to present a petition against further concession to the Catholics from the Dean and Canons of Windsor, but really for a very different purpose. This prince had never taken any active part in politics. As Commander-in-chief he had earned an unenviable

notoriety in connexion with the traffic in commissions by his mistress, the infamous Mrs Mary Ann Clarke. Earlier in life he had been unpleasantly conspicuous as an unfortunate general, during the earlier years of the French Revolution, at the Helder and elsewhere. After the inquiry into his conduct in 1810, he had felt it necessary to retire for a period from the office of Commander-in-chief, in which, however, he was in no long time reinstated. From this period, he had divided his time between the routine business of the Horse Guards and pleasures of no very refined or laudable sort; but in party politics he had taken no open part. A *coup d'état* of some sort, however, was now grievously lacked by the high tory and church party, and this the royal duke condescended to supply. In presenting the petition from the clergy of Windsor, his royal highness unexpectedly electrified the House by a long and evidently studied address, in which he committed himself to the utmost against any further concession in favour of his Catholic fellow-subjects.

In the course of this extraordinary speech, his royal highness, after stating that he now felt called upon to express his full feelings now that their lordships were required to make an entire change in the constitution of the country, observed upon the mischiefs which the agitation of this question had already inflicted upon the nation. He asserted that it had not only caused the retirement from the service of his sovereign of one of her greatest statesmen, but had assisted to bring on that dreadful malady which clouded and wrapt in gloom the later years of George III. He

called upon the House to mark the alarming change of language in the Catholics and their friends. Formerly, he said, they seemed willing to acquiesce in such safeguards and securities as might be deemed indispensable. Now, the legislature and the country were to be delivered up, as it were, bound hand and foot, to their mercies. He asserted the wrong which would thus be done to the church in giving power to legislate for her to her enemies, and members of a religion which set itself above all civil power. He then adverted to the coronation oath, and in doing so warned the peers not to believe that he spoke the sentiments of any other person. The act, he said, was his own, and the unprompted decision of his own unassisted judgment and his own unbiassed feelings. He then proceeded to read the words of the coronation oath, which bind the king to maintain to the utmost of his power the Protestant reformed establishment, and to preserve to the hierarchy all their rights and privileges; and asserted that these words, from which no king of England could relieve himself, were an effectual bar to his assent to the concessions now asked for; and he concluded by emphatically assuring their lordships that he had only uttered the principles he conscientiously entertained from his youth, and which his maturer judgment had only more and more confirmed; and he ended by saying:—"These are the principles to which I shall adhere, and which I shall maintain and act up to, to the latest moment of my existence, whatever may be my situation in life, so help me God!"

That this strange and very questionable adjuration from the lips of the then heir-presumptive of the throne should produce a prodigious effect upon the peers, is no matter for surprise, nor was the effect upon the public much less. No device was omitted to give the speech an extensive circulation. It was printed in every possible shape, upon velvet, upon silk, upon vellum, upon the finest paper, and in numberless instances framed and hung up in the mansions of the anti-catholic party. Every art was also called into requisition to make the public believe that the address was the spontaneous and unprompted act of the royal speaker. Lord Eldon, in his Letters and Diary, affects to call it rash but honest; and the king, it was currently said, was displeased somewhat by the not very delicate allusion to the probable succession, with which it ended. Few reflecting persons, either at or since that period, have, however, believed this to have been an unprompted step. It was probably known to the Duke of York that King George IV., who was as deeply adverse to the Catholics as ever George III. had been, would be glad of anything which might appear to bar the further progress of the question.

As an argumentative composition, the speech of the Duke of York was powerless for any such result. Its general strain of reasoning is trite and commonplace. The argument drawn from the coronation oath was already refuted; for if the royal sanction to all the many concessions that followed the crisis of 1778 and of 1782 was no violation of the coronation oath, how could the farther relaxation now

asked be a violation of it? But from this extraordinary effusion one result flowed, and this was, that it put the king in this position, that should he ever be asked to sanction a bill for Catholic emancipation, he must be asked to do that which the heir-presumptive to the crown had solemnly sworn he believed to be perjury of the deepest and most awful sort. This, it might be hoped, would effectually bar the triumph of the Catholics during at least the lives of the king and the duke; and under this impression this singular step was probably taken. That it helped to delay that eventual triumph for a year or two, is very possible; but, on the continued agitation of the question by the Catholics and their friends, it had no effect. It fearfully augmented, indeed, the energy and exasperation of the Irish Catholic Association, who, seeing in prospect a monarch who had sworn to deny them that which they believed to be their right, even if advised that it was so by a unanimous legislature, determined to carry their measures during the lifetime of the reigning king, who, at all events, had not committed himself to this interpretation of his sworn duty.

In accordance with this determined feeling, the bill for the relief of the Catholics, which had been introduced by Sir Francis Burdett, and after a powerful speech by Mr Canning, and a reply by Mr Peel the tone of which was anything but confident, had been read a second time by a majority of twenty-seven, was rapidly passed forward in the Commons, and passed the third reading by a majority of twenty-one. The bill was brought up to the House of Peers on the 11th of May

by Sir John Newport, attended by a considerable number of members of the House of Commons, and presented by him to the Lord Chancellor, who in his correspondence complains that the bringers in of the obnoxions bill looked him "rather impudently in the face" on that occasion. However, says Lord Eldon to his daughter, to whom he was giving this amusing account, "I am of opinion that these gentlemen will never see their bill again;" and so it proved, the noble lord not having ventured much in risking this prediction.

The Catholic Relief Bill was debated May 17th, on a motion by Lord Donoughmore for the second reading, and thrown out of the House of Peers by a majority of 178 against 130. This result seems to have been deemed by the "Protestant party," as they chose to style themselves, a greater triumph than it really was. Lord Eldon, writing to his favourite daughter, Lady F. J. Bankes, on the 20th May, says:—"We are now becoming composed after our triumph. * * * The friends of the Roman-catholics were weak enough to think that we should beat them by ten only. How they should so miscalculate it is not easy to conceive." Miscalculation was not so difficult, however, as Lord Eldon appears to fancy, if his own account of the methods employed to swell the majority be correct. Writing to Lady Bankes, May the 25th, 1825, he says:—"I forgot to tell you yesterday that we have got a new favourite toast. Lady Warwick and Lady Braybrooke (I think that is her name) would not let their husbands go to the House to vote for the Catholics;

so we Protestants drink daily as our favourite toast, 'The ladies who locked up their husbands!'"

Whatever might be the means, however, taken to obtain the majority on this occasion, it is impossible, even at this moment, not to be impressed with the strength of some of Lord Eldon's objections, especially when contrasted with the weakness of other portions of his address from the woolsack on this occasion. The Lord Chancellor said:—"He confessed himself at a loss to understand how the bill came before their lordships in its present shape and form. From the votes of the House of Commons, it appeared that another bill had been brought into that House to disfranchise a great number of freeholders in Ireland; and also that a resolution had been agreed to that it was expedient that a provision should be made by the state for the Roman-catholic clergy. Now, there was no man but must see that there was an intimate connexion between these propositions and the bill now before their lordships for consideration. Yet their lordships were called upon to pass this measure, now under their consideration, without having any means of anticipating what would be the fate of the other two propositions. That, he would say, was not a proper mode of legislating." This was a home-thrust; for if the fate of the Catholic Relief Bill were to be held to depend upon the fate of the proposal for a state provision for the Catholic clergy, the lords were right in rejecting it, inasmuch as it was impossible that the other proposal could ever become law. It needs little reflection to convince any one that a proposal to endow a Ca-

tholic clergy is really a proposal to endow dissenters in the mass; for it is impossible to suppose that so powerful a body as that of the Protestant dissenters would ever permit Catholics to be endowed and themselves excluded. But such an endowment as this would be a subversion of the Establishment; because the question immediately arises—If all are to be paid, why should not all be paid equally? As all sects would, in such case, be equally established, no reason would remain for the retention of any other inequality. Neither was it ever proved that the Romanist clergy of Ireland, supposing stipends to be voted by Parliament, would or could accept them. That the re-establishment in Ireland of the Roman-catholic Church is what the Irish Catholic body have ultimately in view, few persons will doubt who reflect upon Mr O'Connell's conduct as to tithes, and upon the aid he received from the priesthood in his efforts to repeal the Act of Union, evidently upon the calculation that a Catholic Irish Parliament would unquestionably vote the re-establishment of a Catholic Irish Church. But to become stipendiaries of government would be a tacit relinquishment of a claim some day to be made, in the opinion of every Catholic priest in Ireland; and hence the admitted improbability of such an offer, if made, being accepted.

That this victory, as it was termed, was in the opinion of the anti-catholic party equivalent to a settlement, for some time to come, of the restless involvements of Irish politics, is evident in Lord Eldon's correspondence, who says the king "was much relieved by

it;" but events were even then impending, both at home and abroad, which were fated to disperse these ill-founded hopes to the winds; nor did the session of parliament pass over without the occurrence of symptoms significant of what was coming. After the defeat of the Catholic Relief Bill in the Upper House, the session had, with the exception of a sort of retaliatory motion by Mr Hume for an inquiry into the state of the Irish Church, quietly "dragged its slow length along." But although all seemed placidity within the House, this was by no means the case out of doors, where many who, a few months before, were sunning themselves in the beams of a supposed prosperity, saw clouds begin to creep, almost insensibly at first, over the sky, and felt themselves become, on the sudden,— "all sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

On the opening of the session of parliament of 1825, the king had, in a strain similar to that of 1824, congratulated the two Houses on the "prosperous state" of the country, by which was meant the continuous rise in prices, which, commencing in 1823, had gone on with an accelerated velocity, and in June 1825 was still in progress. During the first five months of the year 1825, no symptoms had occurred of a nature deeply to alarm far-seeing commercial men; but after that period the scene began alarmingly to change. In order, however, to obtain a true idea of the peril of the national monetary position at this eventful period, it is necessary briefly to revert to the past, and then to exhibit, by contrasting that past with the present, the realities of the situation now to be de-

scribed. In the first place, it must be remembered that, prior to the year 1797, when an inconvertible paper currency was necessitated by events, that which is now called "banking" was, comparatively speaking, an inconsiderable trade. The trade of "discounting" was mostly in the hands of private persons, who discounted such commercial bills as were brought to them with real money—that is to say, by means of guineas of gold and a minor coinage of standard silver. The bankers who carried on trade by means of circulating their credit in the shape of promissory-notes for small sums payable on demand, were few and inconsiderable as regarded their transactions. One consequence of this state of the currency was, that the money circulating from hand to hand was nearly altogether metallic. Prior to the breaking out of hostilities with the French Republic of 1793, the Bank of England issued no notes for sums under ten pounds, and her circulation was, comparatively speaking, small. Hence at this period the gold and silver coinage in constant use constituted the bulk of the current money; and hence such things as "money panics," to any extent, were not known. If a short harvest or any other cause rendered it necessary to export bullion, credit was not endangered, the circulation of the country being itself metallic. Inconvenience there was; but not national peril nor widely-spread mischief. The bullion could be spared without creating such pressure as to alarm; and the event passed over as an ordinary commercial vicissitude passes over.

From and after the unfortunate crisis of 1797, how-

ever, an entire and most undesirable change in the nature of the circulating money of the country was introduced. As the Bank of England thenceforward circulated notes of all denominations as low as one pound, and as everything conspired to cause the bank to increase these issues more and more—as the augmentation of taxes, the borrowing of loan after loan, the rapidly increasing transactions of commerce, and the monopoly which this country nearly had of the marine carrying-trade, all combined to render these issues greater and greater, they went on at a growing pace. But the Bank of England could not supply the whole of the circulating paper requisite under this system. The issues of the parent bank were necessarily followed by an augmentation of issues by the country bankers, until, from an insignificant, it became a great trade, and the country banks from a few grew to be eight hundred and upwards in number.

Under such a system as this the gold and silver in circulation necessarily, and in no very long time, entirely disappeared. This was an inevitable consequence as well as proof of the depreciation of the whole circulating medium through the paper additions to it. Whilst circulating in company with the bank-notes, now depreciated to a great extent, guineas and shillings of full weight were necessarily made to pass for less than their real exchangeable value, as compared with gold and silver abroad, and with gold and silver in the shape of bullion at home. The consequence was, that it became highly profitable to export the coin, or to melt it clandestinely and sell it as bullion at home.

This no one could avoid seeing, when a light guinea, which could be legally sold, was worth more in paper than one of full weight was as coin of the realm; when gold bullion rose to more than six pounds per ounce in spite of the quantity forced upon the market, and when bills drawn abroad upon England, which ought to have, as trade then was, borne some premium, sold at a heavy discount, a bill drawn at Hamburgh on London selling only for as much gold coin abroad as was equal to the gold which the paper money in which such bill was payable would command in England. The ultimate result was, that in a few years no gold nor silver undebased coin was left. The market was loaded with bullion, the produce of the clandestinely melted coinage, to such a degree that for years there was no openly quoted price of gold, and men's notions of value became totally confused; and excepting paper, nothing was to be seen but debased shillings, tradesmen's tokens, and worn-out copper pence and halfpence.* Under these circumstances, when once the

* The confusion caused by the clandestine melting and exportation of the coin is manifest in the evidence given before the Bullion Committee of 1810. That the clandestine melting of the coin put an end to all *open* transactions for a length of time, is clear enough from the following brief testimony:—

"Aaron Asher Goldsmid *examined.* (*Report*, 1810, p. 41.)

"Can you explain why the price of gold is frequently omitted to be quoted for a long period together, as for 1806, 1807, and 1808? When the prices of gold are not quoted, the transactions are not either numerous or important.

"Do you mean to say that during the whole of these years there were not transactions enough to constitute a price? I have no doubt that the aggregate amount was sufficient to constitute a price,

credit of the inconvertible paper was established, there

but I am not aware if there were anything sufficient done between each post-day."

In fact, the market was supplied by bullion made from melted coin, notwithstanding this was felony, and notwithstanding there were heavy penalties for exporting coin, or selling it for more than its nominal value. This state of affairs brought about a higher price for foreign gold, which could be legally exported after being sworn to be foreign, and gold which could not be so sworn off. The scrupulous gave a higher price for the foreign gold to avoid perjury. The unscrupulous swore as suited their interest. This comes out frequently in the evidence of 1810.

"WILLIAM MERLE *examined*. (*Report*, 1810, p. 25.)

"What has been the market price of gold during the last year? I can hardly inform you what can be called the market price, foreign gold is so much higher out of proportion than English gold. * *

"I understood you to state that the quantity you have sold through Mocatta and Co. for exportation has been during last year greater than in any former year? Yes.

"And that the quantity of exportable gold brought to you has been less? Yes.

"State the reason for the existence of these two circumstances.—In consequence of the high price at which I am obliged to purchase gold, I am obliged to swear it off for exportation to get the price, for the price I gave for it is higher than the price I can get for home consumption.

"It is the present high price which carries it abroad? Yes, for the Bank give no more for foreign gold than they do for English gold. The foreign gold is now 12s. 1½d. above the English price, and the Bank cannot afford to give that."

It is astonishing how, with this and similar evidence before them, and with the knowledge that the balance of trade during most of that period was constantly sending back again the gold exported, the committee of 1810 and 1819 could take "the price of gold" as a measure of the extent of the depreciation of the paper currency, it being plain there was no regular market price.

could hardly occur anything to shake that credit with prudence on the part of the Bank of England. Particular country banks might, and indeed did, from imprudence, become insolvent, and their promissory-notes valueless; but the gap was filled immediately by the notes of another bank, and the circulation remained as before.

At the period at which we have now arrived, these circumstances were totally changed. By the provisions of the Cash-payments Act of 1819, every promissory-note payable to order or to bearer on demand became, from and after the 1st day of May 1823, payable in the current gold and silver coin of the realm, and in no other way legally. But the act which laid bankers and others issuing promissory-notes or other paper securities under this obligation of paying them in coin, also enacted the withdrawal of a large portion of the circulation of the bankers, by prohibiting from that day all bank-notes for sums under five pounds, thus creating a vacuum which must have been filled up by means of a gold and silver coinage. This latter provision, however, the Small-note Act of 1822 suspended, at the same time leaving the issues of paper money exposed to all the other requirements of the original act of 1819. The enormous peril to which this position exposed the whole paper currency, it needs little reflection to understand. Under the operation of the Small Note Act, the entire circulating money of the country continued to be paper. No coins were seen, excepting such silver and copper coins as were needed for payments under a pound in amount;

and these the bankers willingly supplied to the extent required, the profit upon their extended small note issues amply repaying them for any inconvenience or outlay thus caused. The consequence of this was (as has been seen) a gradual and gradually accelerating advance in prices, which, beginning with one or two articles, was in turn extended over all; this tendency to higher prices, and the plenty of money caused by the extended issues, inducing a host of speculations, some of the most extraordinary sort, including loans of money to the new republics in Spanish America, which Mr Canning had virtually acknowledged. These speculations, from the extent in part to which they were pushed, and in part from the strange wildness of many of them, had not only attracted the serious attention of cautious and experienced mercantile men, but had been passingly alluded to in parliament. They had not, however, been made the subject of anything resembling a formal debate; so that, up to a period near that when a session usually ends, the routine of parliamentary business had not on this account been interrupted, though towards autumn the unusual state of imports as compared with exports, in conjunction with awkward symptoms of an approaching unfavourable exchange, had now begun to act upon many minds, and to cause throughout the country an ill-defined apprehension of some approaching danger, of which no one could predict the extent nor precisely anticipate the shape.

In this position were the trade and monetary affairs of the country, when on the 22d of June, just a fort-

night before the close of the session, the complacency of the House of Commons was disturbed by the presentation, by Mr Hume, of a petition of a very unusual character.* It was the petition of a Mr Jones

* This petition, which was, unquestionably, in part, instrumental in producing the crisis which occurred at the close of 1825, is as follows:—"That on the 6th June 1825 the petitioner (Frederick Jones, of St Philip and St Jacob, out parish, Bristol) went to the banking-shop of Rickets, Thorne and Courtney in the city of Bristol, presented to a clerk there six of the one-pound notes of the said Rickets and partners, and demanded gold in payment of them; that the said clerk told the petitioner that the gold was locked up and that he could not get at it; and that he further told the petitioner that 'the bank did not pretend to pay its notes in gold,' though the notes aforesaid, held and presented by the petitioner, contained the words following, to wit—'Bristol Castle Bank, High Street and Wine Street, I promise to pay John Sayce, Esq., or bearer, one pound, on demand, value received; Bristol 28th day of January 1825, for Rickets, Thorne and Courtney (signed) JOHN COURTNEY.' That at last the clerk tendered some gold and some silver, and some of the paper of this bank, which the petitioner did not take, because the clerk told him he might have sovereigns the next day; that the petitioner again went on the 7th of the said month of June to the shop of the said bankers, and there presented for payment notes of the said bank to the amount of £45; that he there and then made a demand of gold in payment of these last said notes; that the cashier and that the said Courtney refused to make him payment in gold; that the said Courtney tendered the petitioner Bank of England notes in payment of the said £45; and that these Bank of England notes the petitioner refused to take; that after applying for legal advice, the petitioner finds that he has no remedy but an action at law, which he has resorted to, and directed the parties to be arrested; that he cannot, he is informed, obtain judgment in a shorter space of time than about nine months; that the defendants may withhold the money for about a year beyond that period by means of a writ of error; that in the meanwhile he has to run all the risk as to the

of Bristol, and complained to the House that, having presented for payment certain notes of Rickets & Co., bankers, they refused to pay their notes in the coin of the realm according to law, and that consequently the petitioner was compelled to sue the bankers for the money, at great risk and probable loss to himself. The petitioner prayed the House to devise means to make such debts recoverable by a summary process, in order that a real, and not apparent, convertibility into money of all paper securities of this sort might be insured. This petition, which not only asserted that an idea prevailed amongst country bankers that they were not legally bound to give gold for their notes, but also assumed the probability of a money crisis in no long time, and a possible return to inconvertible paper, produced a great impression upon the

ultimate ability of the defendants to pay; and that, after paying his own extra costs incurred by the action, he may have, in consequence of some new law, bank notes to receive in payment, *which bank notes may, if worth anything at all, not be worth at that time one-half of forty-five sovereigns;* that therefore the petitioner, seeing that the present laws authorize the issuing of a paper-money which is, *in fact*, not payable in gold, *seeing that this paper-money is daily falling in value*, seeing that this has been and is most injurious to the petitioner, and has caused great wrong to him to be done, prays that the House will pass a law to ensure *summary* recovery of debts of this sort, and also to cause the parties issuing such dishonoured paper to pay, in case of such refusals as aforesaid, double the amount of the sum the payment of which shall be so refused; or that the House will be pleased to apply to this great and disgraceful and growing evil such other remedy as to the wisdom and the justice and the good faith of the House may seem most meet.—*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, New Series*, vol. xiii. p. 1399.—*June* 27, 1825.

House, and ultimately upon the country. It was first presented to the House, on the 22d of June, by Mr Hume, who asserted that the small-notes bill, by giving colour to the idea that country bankers were not bound to pay in specie, had destroyed or impaired materially the efficacy of the act of 1819. The bankers in the House, however, having insinuated that the character of the petitioner ought to be inquired into before a petition so strange was received and laid on the table, Mr Hume consented to withdraw it for a day or two, and make inquiry as the House wished.

On the 27th of June, Mr Hume re-introduced the petition. The petitioner, he said, was a highly respectable person, and now at hand, and ready to appear at their bar. Mr Hume then went on to say, that as such notions were entertained as to bankers' non-liability to pay in cash, meaning by cash the legal coin of the realm, the prayer of the petition was just, and the legislature ought to re-enact the law, which existed up to 1797, providing for a summary process against bankers who refused payment of their notes. This was met by Mr Hart Davis with an excuse for the bankers, who, he said, had committed a great error; but this arose from warmth, occasioned by their controversy with Mr Jones. Mr Hart Davis said the petition was unnecessary; the bankers were now ready to meet Mr Jones. Lord Folkstone said this was a public, not a private matter, and must be so treated; it was clear that doubts existed as to the law; and he insisted that some measure was necessary to ensure the prompt convertibility of country

bank-notes, and to secure the operation of the act of 1819.

The opportunity was now too tempting to be let slip by the opponents of the Economist party, who, although they, in common with the Economists, had suffered the small-note bill to be carried through by Mr Vansittart (now Lord Bexley), a man of humble acquirements and destitute of the slightest smattering of intelligence as to this intricate matter, probably kept silence on that occasion from a suspicion that the continuation of the small paper must end in some difficulty, the only solution of which might be a new bank-restriction. Under such general impressions, most probably, was made the speech of Mr Hudson Gurney, himself a banker, a man of vast wealth, sound, plain understanding, and considerable general talent. He followed Lord Folkstone, and his address was, in reality, one of the most important that had been made during the session.

Mr Hudson Gurney said, "The noble Lord was slightly incorrect in his statement of the facts. The bankers refused sovereigns, but they tendered bank-notes; first for £6, and next for £45, of their own paper. The amount was nothing. The proceeding was one of very singular simplicity: but the inconvenience was not, as the noble Lord stated, of a person having to go through a process of nine months to recover from the banker, but just of as much time as was required to exchange the notes for specie in London. * * *

"In his view, the circulation of the country was now in a more unsatisfactory state than he had ever known it to be (hear, hear!) The whole arose from the enormous blunder which had been committed in not re-adjusting the standard to

existing circumstances after twenty-five years of another currency, at the time of passing the right honourable gentleman's (Mr Peel's) bill for specie payments; that bill has (as everybody *ought* to have foreseen) forcibly depressed all prices. Thence came of necessity ruin to farmers, embarrassment to landlords, and that degree of distress amongst the whole community, agricultural and otherwise, which rendered it imperative to palliate the evil.

Mr Vansittart (Lord Bexley) was then permitted to bring in his bill to enable bankers to continue their one-pound notes. He as well as Lord Folkstone protested against the step, and told the then Chancellor of Exchequer that it should be limited to one-pound notes of the Bank of England; for in that case the bankers must, as far as their power went, circulate some of the coin of the realm in their several districts; whereas, in issuing their own notes, in those notes the mass of payments were sure to be made, and the gold confined to the metropolis, or nearly so. Government (continued Mr Gurney) had two points which they were resolved to drive. One was to raise the prices of farm-produce. The other was to lower the interest of money, and divert investments, so as to be a relief to the landed interest. They for this had urged the Bank of England to increase her circulation. The bank (as he thought very unwisely) first adopted in part the dead-weight scheme, next advanced on mortgage, and then, worst of all, advanced on stock. But the object was gained, prices rose, interest fell, money became a drug. Hence all the bubbles, all the projects, all the joint-stock companies, the Poyais loans, and the frauds of the share-market—all creating an immense mass of floating engagements, which still went for so much money, and still helped to swell the prices of everything (hear). Now, he need not say, that it was through this enhancement of prices alone that the circulation of the country banks could be augmented. Well! was it not quite obvious that in such a state of things as the present the *exchanges must turn?* Was it

not obvious that gold, which alone was kept by law at £3, 17s. 10½d. the ounce, must be leaving the country? Was it not plain that the Bank of England would *then* have no choice but to pull in their papers, and that general embarrassment must soon begin? Prices would then fall; and if, following the foreign drain, any domestic alarm (no matter whether well-founded or unfounded) should arise, the country being now entirely without specie, and a run upon the country banks for sovereigns should be created, all these country banks must necessarily come to the Bank of England for them or fall. Gentlemen here (continued Mr Gurney), in talking of country circulation, always seemed to suppose that the amount of his paper in circulation is the limit of the liability of the banker. In point of fact, the greatest danger, in time of difficulty, is from his *deposits*, which persons wishing to realize demanded instanter (hear). To this conclusion, therefore, he must come; the Bank of England, if this state of things should occur, must be driven to a dilemma; they must either continue to discount until they themselves stopped, or, by refusing to discount, they must stop the whole country (hear). Who, in such a position of affairs, could fulfil his engagements, or how many of those he addressed could, for years to come, be so fortunate as to obtain their rents, was more than he could predict."

Mr Gurney was followed by Mr Ellice (member for Coventry) who reiterated the warnings as to the unsatisfactory state of money affairs which Mr Gurney had given, and asserted that any alarm abroad, or panic at home, would, in the then critical position of the currency, probably force government to try another bank restriction. How could this be avoided, when the circulating medium of the kingdom was now nearly made up of these one pound-notes with a little

depreciated silver? Mr John Smith then rose to deprecate such statements as were making by the noble lord, and by the members for Coventry and Norwich. He was astonished to hear it said that the circulation was nine-tenths one-pound notes. A large sum in five-pound and five-guinea notes was in circulation. He thought no measure necessary. This petition clearly emanated from a private quarrel; and he believed there were not three bankers in the country who did not know that their notes were alone payable in gold, or who would hesitate so to pay. He, as a banker, might refuse such a demand; but if he did, where would his credit be, on which he rested? He felt no fears as to the currency; and as for the dread of honourable gentlemen that a great country like this might find itself "without a currency," he laughed at such fears. Mr Abercromby thought instant convertibility necessary; and if requisite, which he doubted, he would vote for a measure to ensure it. If such refusals as the present grew into a precedent, the act of 1819 was nullified unquestionably.

After Mr Abercromby, Mr Peel rose, evidently dissatisfied with the temper which the House now began to exhibit; and somewhat galled, and probably something alarmed, by the forebodings of Mr Hudson Gurney and Mr Ellice, which, even then, began to find echoes out of doors. Upon the Home Secretary now devolved the task of defending the indefensible act of 1819, its real author, Mr Ricardo, having died in 1823, not without suspecting the enormous extent of mischief of which he had been the author; and to

this task Mr Peel now set himself with that art which seemed nature in him. His object was evidently to throw oil upon the troubled waters, and to make light of the predictions of Mr Gurney and Mr Ellice, so as to baffle their effect upon the public mind.

"He perfectly coincided (he said) in the remark with which the honourable member for Calne (Mr J. Smith) prefaced his speech, that this was not a question properly involving the numerous extrinsic considerations which had been gone into by the honourable gentleman who had preceded him. He apprehended that the House was about to suffer itself to be drawn into a debate of the most delicate kind, and this without sufficient information, inquiry, and reflection. He deprecated this the more because there was not one person connected with the Bank of England present. One gentleman so connected had indeed subsequently come in whilst this was going on, and to him he had most imperfectly described what had been said upon the subject. It did seem to him (Mr Peel) most unnecessary to enter into any discussion such as that which had been commenced. The transaction itself, as he understood it, was most simple indeed. To what did it amount? Merely to this—a country banker had been applied to, on one occasion, for six sovereigns in exchange for £6 in paper, and, on another occasion, for £45 in gold in exchange for his notes. The banker had refused, in the first instance, to give the party gold; but that banker had afterwards, as the House had heard, come forward, saying that this refusal had arisen solely out of the very intemperate manner in which the gold had been demanded. The banker admitted that if the application were to be made again he was legally bound to pay the party in gold (hear). This was the whole transaction. He was sorry to hear that the honourable member for Coventry thought the circulation in so bad a state, and would have been still more sorry to hear him prophesy so darkly of the future; but he became happy

again when he discovered that the honourable gentleman prudently postponed the fulfilment of his own prediction until a time much later than that when, according to his own account of the matter, the evil, of which he was the prophet, ought to happen. Into the honourable gentleman's alarms therefore he really could not enter. He could not help thinking that the circulation was in a state much more satisfactory than it would have exhibited had the House entertained the proposition of the honourable member in respect to the change in the currency, originally suggested by the member for Essex (Mr Western)—that is to say, to appoint a committee to arrange the settlement of all contracts outstanding for the last one-and-twenty years. He admitted, however, that the question of the currency was a serious one; and for that very reason he would pause, and pause for some time, before he again approached it. (Mr Peel then stated) that the act of 1819 did not repeal all the restrictions under which the issues of the Bank of England had been placed. Those that were salutary remained. It appeared to him that the proposal which had been made to enact some summary method of proceeding in cases where country banks were implicated, was invidious and dangerous; especially when so many and so great interests were now concerned. There could be no doubt as to the liability of country bankers to pay in gold; and, in this case, the banker having candidly acknowledged that he committed a great error in refusing to pay, under any circumstances, why should the House proceed further?"

This address produced, in part, the effect intended palpably by the speaker;—it put an end to any further dismal predictions as to the future; but it could not silence those who had become aware of the enormous injustice of the act of 1819. Mr Alexander Baring, who followed the Home-Secretary, described it as "fraught with injustice between debtor and creditor." Hon-

ourable gentlemen (he said) strangely boasted of having carried this great alteration, without reference to existing engagements, public and private. He, however, viewing the whole as pregnant with injustice, could not understand such boasts. He could give no credit to those who pursued this course, unjust as it was, but now that the deed was done, he would oppose all further tampering with the money of the country. After declarations from Mr Canning and Mr Huskisson, of the undoubted liability, not only of bankers, but every one who owed, to pay in the coin of the realm, Mr Hume wound up the debate by saying, that he was not satisfied with either the conduct or intentions of these bankers; and that, if no one else would, he should propose a summary mode of dealing with such cases.

The debate then dropped; nor was the subject again mentioned in the House during the few days that intervened betwixt that period and the close of the session. Enough had been said, however, to create a sensation in the country, as to this delicate matter, of perilous consequence. Men not only now knew that every bank-note was legally payable in gold on demand, but an impression was abroad that circumstances might occur to make gold the only safe instrument of exchange to be possessed of. Nor was this doubt at all diminished by the congratulation on the unprecedented and "increasing prosperity of the country," as this unsound state of monetary matters was termed, which formed the concluding paragraph of the king's speech, on proroguing parliament on the 6th July 1825.

CHAPTER VIII.

Exportation of Bullion—Commercial Uneasiness—Extensive Speculation—State of Circulation and Prices—A demand for Gold begins to be visible—The Bank diminishes her Issues—Consequent alarm—The Country Bankers in Danger—Stoppage of Godfrey Wentworth, and Co., in London and Yorkshire—Panic commences—A general Run and Cessation of Credit—Critical State of the Bank of England—Saved by a Box of Small Notes—Extent of consequent Ruin—Lord Liverpool's Health declines—Mr Robinson attacks the Country Banks—Small-Note Act repealed—Mr Peel defends the Bankers—Supports a Scheme for Joint Stock Banks—Corn Law Debates—The Silk Trade—Mr Canning's Speech thereon—Its Intention and Effects—Mr Peel's Position—Liberals aid Canning—General Election of 1826—Interference of the Catholic Priests—Parliament meets—Duke of York dies—Lord Liverpool's Illness—Virulence of Parties—Mr Peel's Speech on the Catholic Claims—Huskisson's first Sliding Scale—Lord Liverpool resigns and dies—Eldon, Peel, and Wellington resign—Canning forms a Cabinet.

SCARCELY had the gratulations on the prosperous condition of the country, embodied in the concluding paragraphs of the royal speech at the close of the session, been uttered, when the commercial world began to be alarmed by symptoms and appearances from which it might be apprehended that these gratu-

latory remarks were anything but well founded. Men engaged in trade, and capitalists, had seen at last with uneasiness the reckless advances of money made through the years 1822, 1823, and 1824, in the shape of loans to the republics which had been moulded out of the revolted Spanish American colonies. These loans being remitted in silver, which forms the current money of these countries, had nearly denuded Great Britain of that metal.* Nothing could exceed the eagerness with which speculators, as soon as the success of the Spanish American revolters became certain, ran into these rash speculations. Captivated by the accounts of the enormous mineral wealth of these regions, they fancied the returns secure, forgetting that the successful insurgents against the mother country had yet achieved no safe nor settled systems of government for themselves, and unmindful that, be the intrinsic wealth of a country what it may, industry and enterprise are yet necessary to secure these riches, —qualities to which the naturally indolent quiescence of the Spanish Celt is opposed, and which the ease of

* Returns of Silver Exported.

Years	Silver Bullion.		Foreign Coin.		British Coin.		Totals.	
	oz.	dwts.	oz.	dwts.	oz.	dwts.	oz.	dwts
1822	7,980,315	10	6,565,506	8	0	0	14,545,821	18
1823	1,511,331	15	10,056,922	5	0	0	11,568,258	0
1824	2,516,680	0	6,069,056	0	0	0	8,585,731	0
1825	1,313,762	0	4,134,462	8	118,175	0	5,566,399	8

living in these climates diminishes still further.* The plethora of money which had fostered these unadvised schemes had also given rise to a vast number of domestic speculations of the most visionary and singu-

* Foreign Loans Contracted for.

[Those marked * continue to pay dividends.]

Countries.	Amounts.	Dates.	Contractors.
	£		
*Austrian ...	2,500,000	1823	Rothschild.
*Belgian ...	2,000,000	1823	Ditto.
*Brazilian ...	3,200,000	1824	Wilson and Co.
* Ditto ...	2,000,000	1825	Rothschild.
* Ditto ...	800,000	1829	Rothschild and Wilson.
Buenos Ayres ...	1,000,000	1824	Baring and Co.
Chili ...	1,000,000	1822	Hullett and Co.
Columbian ...	2,000,000	1822	Baring and Co.
Ditto ...	4,750,000	1824	Goldschmidt and Co.
*Danish ...	5,500,000	1825	Wilson and Co.
Greek ...	800,000	1824	Loughnan and Co.
Ditto ...	2,000,000	1825	Ricardo and Co.
Guatemala ...	1,428,571	1825	Powles and Co.
Guadaljava ...	600,000	1825	Ellard and Co.
Mexican ...	3,200,000	1824	Goldschmidt and Co.
Ditto ...	3,300,000	1825	Barclay and Co.
*Neapolitan ...	2,500,000	1824	Rothschild.
*Prussian ...	5,000,000	1818	Ditto.
* Ditto ...	3,500,000	1822	Ditto.
Portuguese ...	1,500,000	1823	Goldschmidt and Co.
Peruvian ...	450,000	1822	Frys and Co.
Ditto ...	750,000	1824	Ditto.
Ditto ...	616,000	1825	Ditto.
*Russian ...	3,500,000	1822	Rothschild.
Spanish ...	1,500,000	1821	Haldimand.
Ditto ...	1,500,000	1823	Campbell and Co.

As these Returns are extracted from the Appendix to the Report of the Secret Committee on the Bank of England Charter, their correctness may probably be depended upon.

lar character, to such extent as to more than rival the celebrated South Sea bubble era in wildness and extravagance.* The superfluity of paper accommodation, which was the parent of these mercantile monstrosities (for what excepting monstrosities can washing companies and portable gas companies be called?) caused as a matter of course a corresponding advance in the

* It was calculated that up to the year 1823 there were already in existence in Great Britain—

Canal companies,	63
Dock companies,	7
Insurance companies,	25
Water companies,	16
Bridge companies,	4
Gas companies,	27
Road companies,	7
Miscellaneous,	7
Total,	156

The following summary of the new associations that sprung into brief life from and after the year 1823, was calculated and generally credited at the time. For its correctness the author of course cannot vouch:

Numbers.	Names and Descriptions of Companies.	Subscribed Capital.
74	Mining companies,	£38,370,000
29	Gas companies,	12,077,000
20	Insurance companies,	35,820,000
26	Investment companies,	52,600,000
54	Railway and canal companies,	44,051,000
67	Steam companies,	85,555,000
11	Commercial companies,	10,450,000
26	Building companies,	13,781,000
23	Provision Companies,	836,000
202	Miscellaneous associations,	148,109,000
	Total,	£441,649,000

price of almost every commercial article of consumption; and this rise was again the parent of speculative importations of colonial and foreign produce to such extent that, even before the panic, the prices of certain commodities could not be commensurately supported.*

* The following Table, compiled partly from Mr Tooke's Treatise, and partly from the prices-current of the day, will give a correct notion of the general scale of advance :—

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF PRICES. (Bonding Goods in Bond.)

	1823–4.	1825.
Brimstone, rough, per ton,	£6 10 0	£10 0 0
Butcher meat, beef, per lb.,	0 0 4½	0 0 8
Ditto, mutton,	0 0 4	0 0 7½
Cochineal, Spanish,	1 0 0	1 6 0
Coffee, British plantation, per cwt.,	6 0 0	6 18 0
Ditto, St Domingo,	2 18 0	4 8 0
Cotton, Georgia, bowed free, per lb.,	0 0 8½	0 1 6½
Ditto, Bengal and Surat,	0 0 6½	0 1 1½
Flour, Yarmouth, per 14 lbs.,	0 1 8	0 2 6
Indigo, East India, per lb.,	0 9 9	0 16 0
Iron, per ton,	6 0 0	13 0 0
Lead, per fodder,	22 10 0	30 10 0
Rum, Jamaica, per gallon,	0 2 9	0 3 4
Extra ditto,	0 3 2	0 3 8
Saltpetre, East India, per cwt.,	1 4 0	1 16 0
Spices, cinnamon, per lb.,	0 6 8	0 13 6
mace,	0 5 2	0 18 0
nutmegs,	0 5 1	0 12 0
pepper, black,	0 0 5½	0 0 9½
Spelter, 1824, per ton,	20 10 0	41 15 0
Sugar, B. P. Gar., average per cwt.	1 10 0	2 5 2
Ditto, white Havannah,	2 4 0	2 17 0
Silk, Reggio, per lb.,	0 11 6	0 17 0
Ditto, China,	1 0 0	1 8 0
Tallow, St Petersburg, Y.C. per cwt.	1 11 0	2 3 0
Tobacco, Virginia, ordinary, per cwt.	0 0 2½	0 0 6½
Tin blocks, per cwt.,	3 17 0	5 1 0
Wool, per lb.,	0 6 6	0 9 6
Wheat, per quarter,	2 1 0	3 6 0

The most trustworthy account of the almost insane operations of 1824 and 1825 is perhaps that of Mr Tooke, the well-known author of the treatise on "High and Low Prices," who, in his "Considerations on the State of the Currency," published in 1826, immediately after the panic, thus describes the steps that led to it.* Speaking of the latter months of 1824 and the first six months of 1825, Mr Tooke thus proceeds:—

"Never did the public exhibit so great a degree of infatuation, so complete an abandonment of all the most ordinary rules of mercantile reasoning, since the celebrated bubble year of 1720, as it did in the latter part of 1824 and the first three or four months of 1825.

"The speculative anticipation of an advance was no longer confined to articles which presented a plausible ground for some rise, however small. It extended itself to articles which were not only not deficient in quantity, but actually in excess. Thus coffee, of which the stock was increased compared with the average of former years, advanced from 70 to 80 per cent.; spices rose in some instances from 100 to 200 per cent., without any reason whatever, and with a total ignorance on the part of the operators of everything connected with the relation of the supply to the consumption.

* The depression in the rate of interest created by this monetary plethora is thus exhibited by Mr Tooke:—

Dates.	3 Per Cent. Consols.	Premium on Exchequer Bills.
April 3, 1823, ...	73½	10 to 12
July 1, ——, ...	80¾	21 to 24
Oct. 3, ——, ...	82½	37 to 40
January 1, 1824,	86	51 to 53
April 2, ——,	94¼	56 to 58

Tooke on the State of the Currency, 1826, p. 41.

"In short, there was hardly an article of merchandise which did not participate in the rise; for it had become the business of the speculators, or of the brokers, who were interested in the raising and keeping up prices, to look minutely through the general prices-current, with a view to discover any article which had not advanced, in order to make it the subject of anticipated demand. If a person not under the influence of the prevalent delusion ventured to inquire for what reason any particular article had risen, the common answer was, 'Everything else has risen, and *therefore* this ought to rise.'

"Whilst such were the transactions in the markets for goods, and whilst there was an extension of the system of loans to the transatlantic states, some of them affording little or no security, but almost all coming out at a premium, an enlarged field was presented for the spirit of gambling to enter upon. New mining, insurance, and other schemes, were set on foot, on the principle of joint stock companies, in immense numbers.

"The earliest South American mining speculations or associations formed in this country had been entered into with considerable circumspection, the parties with whom they originated having, by local information and connexion, secured comparatively beneficial contracts, and priority of the working of mines known to be most productive. These apparent advantages being made known, attracted numerous persons to buy shares from the original subscribers at a progressively increasing premium. The great gains—or rather premiums in anticipation of gains—thus obtained by one or two of these associations, held out an inducement to the formation of new ones.

"It is well known how numerously mining and other joint stock companies sprung up, and how successful they were for some time in catching and turning to account the disposition for hazardous adventure which now pervaded the nation. The operators on the share market made the new schemes the basis for an enormous extent of gambling. Many persons, quite removed from all connexion with business—retired officers,

widows, and single women of small fortune—risked their incomes or their savings in every species of desperate enterprize. The competition and scramble for premiums in concerns which ought never to have been but at a discount, were perfectly astounding to those who took no part in such transactions. These operations in shares had an effect like that of speculations in goods, in adding to the mass of the circulation of paper and of credit; and this, be it still kept in mind, concurrently with the addition which had been made to the Bank of England issues.

"It is not possible to compute, with even any approach to accuracy, the amount of the addition to the total of the circulating medium by these united causes; but if I were called upon to hazard an estimate, I should conjecture that the whole amount of the circulating medium, including the transactions on credit without the intervention of paper, must have been, on the average of the four months ending April 1825, *little if at all short of fifty per cent. above what it had been in the corresponding period of* 1823. The approximation of this estimate to the truth is rendered probable by the consideration that, upon the principles which determine money prices and nominal values, such a general rise of prices, amounting in some instances to above 100 per cent., without even the allegation of any general scarcity, could not have taken place without an immense expansion of the circulating medium."—*Tooke's Considerations on the State of the Currency*, 1826, p. 47.

It was as a matter of course impossible that, with a currency convertible into gold on demand, at the rate of £3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce, a state of affairs, like that described by Mr Tooke, could long exist without producing an explosion sufficient to rend the whole artificial structure to fragments. Whilst the prices of every commodity had been enhanced to the extent

described, the price of gold, as bought with bank-notes, was kept steady by law, at £3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce. The consequence of this was, that the foreigner who sent goods into Great Britain found it now more profitable to take gold in exchange than to take other goods, gold being kept cheap by the act of 1819, whilst other things were, by the over-issues of paper, enormously enhanced in price. At the same time that this was brought about, the exchanges became highly unfavourable to this country, owing to the rapidly increasing excess of imports over exports, the fruit of this combination of causes; and the assured result of all this was a drain upon the Bank of England for gold, trifling at first, but which, towards the autumn of the year 1825, began to be serious.* The Bank balances were not at that time published in the form nor at the periods adopted at the present time. In the summer of 1825, however, it began to be whispered amongst intelligent commercial men that this process

* The following table of returns of gold exported, during the four years of 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1825, show how rapid, at last, was the drain. A great deal probably went, however, of which no account was ever taken.

Years.	Gold Bullion.	Foreign Coin.	British Coin.	Totals.
	oz. dwts.	oz. dwts.	oz. dwts.	oz. dwts.
1822	57,218 17	97,478 2	147,555 18	284,252 17
1823	87,022 0	111,351 8	98,000 0	296,373 8
1824	241,840 4	128,403 7	764,109 12	1,134,343 8
1825	291,668 14	126,608 17	855,646 1	1,273,323 13

was going on, and with an accelerating velocity, and much secret alarm was the consequence.

The author may be permitted to mention that, being in the summer of 1825 in correspondence with Mr Tooke, he, in a private letter, expressed his apprehensions, and stated to that gentleman the general reasons for them. They were fully corroborated by Mr. Tooke, and to the advice of that gentleman the author and some of his friends probably owed their escape from a scene of ruin which prostrated many apparently more able to brave such a hurricane. To those who had narrowly and week by week watched the exchanges, even from and after the November of 1824, the probability of some violent catastrophe must have been becoming more and more apparent. Towards the autumn of 1825, however, the departure of specie became so decisive that the Bank directors plainly saw they must either head back the tide or be denuded of every ounce of the precious metals in their possession. They accordingly so narrowed their discounts that the unwieldy fabric of over-issue, speculation, and artificial prices, could no longer be supported. The country bankers being denied the accommodation to which they trusted, could no longer discount for their customers; the over-bloated credit system broke down; all bills, of which the payment depended on the discount of other bills, were dishonoured; the bankers, both in London and the country, felt their means fast ebbing away; to save themselves, they without remorse sacrificed their customers; and in the December of 1825 a scene of panic, confusion, consternation, and

ruin commenced, to which, at that time, England had not seen the parallel.* The match was applied to the train by the stoppage of Godfrey Wentworth, and Co., bankers in London and York, with branches in most of the Yorkshire manufacturing towns. After the stoppage of this great bank, the local consternation was so great that all bank-paper lost credit; and at

* It has been fashionable amongst those who have treated of the monetary and commercial events of this extraordinary period, deeply to blame the Directors of the Bank of England for their conduct, from 1822 to 1825, inclusive. That it was not justified by rigid prudence, experience now enables us to pronounce; but the excess of the bank circulation at this period will not account for the addition of fifty per cent. to the entire currency, which probably took place, and which only could have been effected by the reckless, or rather sanguine, conduct of the country banks, helped by the bankers and discount-houses in London.

Circulation of the Bank of England.

	1822.	1823.	1824.	1825.
First Week of	£	£	£	£
January,....	16,950,130	16,379,510	17,230,790	20,756,940
April,.....	17,149,290	16,845,830	19,313,980	20,328,970
July,.....	16,834,780	16,975,880	18,804,980	19,038,330
October,....	17,231,830	17,879,250	19,065,310	18,536,550

Extracted from the Appendix to the Report of the Secret Committee of 1832, p. 82.

On the 3d of December 1825, the bank circulation was £17,477,290, a reduction of three millions between January and December had thus been sufficient to overset the whole credit-system of that strange period.

Richmond, at Huddersfield, and other places, poor persons not possessed of coin were reduced to barter such commodities as they could part with for food. A run upon all the Yorkshire banks commenced, which quickly spread over the whole country, and included London, where several banks who were known to be agents for many country banks, became objects of suspicion, and were run upon and stopped; others escaping with great difficulty.

The panic in London redoubled that in the country; and such was the demand for gold, that had it not been for an extraordinary accident, the Bank of England must have been unable to meet the claims upon her.* As it was, the vast amount of exchequer-bills which the directors, in order to narrow rapidly their circulation, threw upon the market, soon brought these instruments to a discount so heavy that they began to be bought up by persons owing heavy duties, and paid into the exchequer as money. Still, in spite of these devices, the Bank must have been, without much error on their part,

* The position of the bank and of the country is best depicted in the evidence of Jeremiah Harman, Esq., chairman of the bank, as given before the Secret Committee of the Commons in 1832. It is as follows:—

2210. "Do you recollect the circumstances of the commercial world, during October and November (1825)? Full well.

2211. Was it a state of very great increasing difficulty and embarrassment? Dreadful.

2212. You were understood to say that the bullion of the bank was reduced by the end of November to £1,300,000? That is my recollection.

brought under the predicament of a legal if not a real insolvency, had it not been averted by a most

2213. Was that prior to the breaking out of the panic? No. The panic had begun then. I will not charge my memory whether it was by the end of November or in December; but I think it was in the latter end of November.

2214. Were the bank placed in great danger, in the month of December 1825, in consequence of that short supply of bullion? No question about it.

2215. Did Exchequer-bills fall greatly in the month of December 1825? Yes. So much so, that had not the bank lent its aid in a most uncommon manner, there would have been a complete stagnation of everything.

2216. And a total destruction of the paper-credit of the country? I will not say that. There would have been a complete stagnation, in my opinion.

2227. Will you describe the manner in which the bank lent its assistance at that time? We lent it by every possible means, and in modes that we never had adopted before. We took in stock as security: we bought Exchequer-bills; we made advances on Exchequer-bills; we not only discounted outright, but we made advances on the deposits of bills of exchange to an immense amount. In short, by every possible means consistent with safety; and we were not, on some occasions, over nice! Seeing the dreadful state in which the public were, we rendered every assistance in our power.

2218. Do you recollect various communications with the Treasury during that month of December? Yes.

2219. Are the circumstances of these communications now fresh in your recollection? There was a continual communication with the Treasury of what was going on, from day to day—almost from hour to hour.

2220. Did the government at that period recommend to the bank an increased issue of bank-notes? Whether they recommended it or no may admit of a question; but that they encouraged it is most certain.

singular casualty. The directors had at that moment duties to perform which were totally incompatible

2221. Did the bank state to the government the low amount of its bullion at that time? The Minister knew everything, there was no concealment.

2222. Did the bank represent to the Minister that an increased issue of notes, at such a period as that, might probably cause a stoppage of the bank? It was so obvious a thing—as the government had the whole detail before them, that it was hardly necessary to point out what might be the consequence. It was an effort to stop the plague!

2223. Do you remember whether His Majesty's government pointed out to the bank any course for the bank to adopt, in the event of the gold being exhausted? I do not exactly understand the meaning of the question.

2224. Did any communication take place between the bank and the government respecting an order in council to restrain payment in gold at that period? Yes. It was suggested by the bank.

2225. What answer did His Majesty's government give to that? They resisted it, from first to last.

2226. Did the government suggest any other course in refusing this suggestion of the bank? No. They left the bank to act at its discretion,—hoping the panic would subside; and it is to be observed that though our treasure was so much reduced,—even much more reduced as we approached the crisis, we were at that period receiving gold; because we strained every nerve to get gold from the Continent. Bullion came in, and the mint coined. They worked double tides. In short, they worked night and day; so that we were perpetually receiving gold from abroad and coin from the mint.

2227. Was there not a period, in December 1825, when the bank contemplated the great probability of being entirely exhausted of gold? At the latter end of 1825, decidedly.

2228. Do you recollect the lowest quantity of gold which the bank possessed during any period of December 1825? No, I do not remember immediately, but it was miserably low.

with each other. The credit of exchequer bills was, if preserved at all, to be preserved by them; and this

2229. Was it under the £1,300,000 you mentioned? Unquestionably!

2230. It was stated by the late Mr Huskisson to a member of the House of Commons that he, as a member of the administration of that time, suggested to the bank that, if their gold were exhausted, they should place a paper against their doors stating that they had not gold to pay with, but might expect to have gold to recommence payment in a short period. Do you recollect such a suggestion? There was such a suggestion.

2231. What would, in your opinion, have been the consequences of that paper placed against the doors of the bank without preparation to support commercial and financial credit? I hardly know how to contemplate it.

2232. The Bank of England issued one-pound notes at that period. Was that done to protect its remaining treasure? Decidedly, and it worked wonders; and it was by great good luck that we had the means of doing it, because one box containing a quantity of one-pound notes had been overlooked, and they were forthcoming at the lucky moment.

2233. Had there been no foresight in the preparation of these one-pound notes? None whatever, I solemnly declare.

2234. Do you think that the issue of these one-pound notes did avert a complete drain? As far as my judgment goes, it saved the credit of the country.

Report of Secret Committee, p. 153.

Numbers of Commissions of Bankrupt issued against Country Banks.

1825.

January,	1
September,	1

they could not do unless by purchases of or advances on these instruments, which added to the peril of their own position. In fact, the evidence before the Secret Committee demonstrates that the directors had nearly sacrificed the credit of the bank to preserve that of government, and were only rescued by chance.

The directors, much to their credit, had abstained, after the enactment of the small-note bill into law, from availing themselves of its provisions. To this abstinence the fear of forgery probably contributed; for although the actual loss by this means seems not to have been very great, its augmentation was only prevented by a code so bloody as to revolt the feelings of the public in general and of jurymen in particular, who at last began to refuse to convict on the sort of evidence offered.* This incident, however, saved the

	October,	5
	December,	30
		— 37
1826.		
	January,	12
	February,	10
	March,	11
	April,	3
	May,	5
	September,	1
	November,	1
		— 43

Appendix to the Report of the Secret Committee, p. 116.

* Those executed for forgery of or for uttering forged notes of the Bank of England were mostly convicted on the oath of an "Inspector," a servant of the Bank, who swore to the forgery, but refused

bank. A box, containing a large quantity of uncancelled one-pound notes, turned up at the critical period. They had been forgotten as useless lumber; but they now proved the salvation of the institution. The issue of these enabled the directors to husband the few hundred thousand pounds of specie which were now left; the tide was turned; the exchanges rectified themselves, and the crisis was over. Of these one-pound and two-pound notes about a million and a-quarter in value seem to have been issued; and for the advice which led the directors to take this wise step they were indebted, it is known, to Mr Thomas Attwood, himself an eminent banker, a man of great energy and undoubted talent, and after the Reform Bill of 1832, to the success of which he mainly contributed, member of parliament for Birmingham.

It is believed that both Mr Peel and Mr Huskisson were totally unnerved on this occasion, and that Lord Liverpool, who was now in a declining state of health, was equally incapable of energetic action; in short, that the government was for the time paralyzed. This, however, is less to be wondered at than is the total want of preparation for the catastrophe which nearly

to disclose his means of knowing the true note and distinguishing it from the false. Upon this insufficient evidence great numbers, not only of men, but of women, were hanged—hardly a sessions passing without executions for forgery. At last the juries doubted the power of the Inspectors to distinguish certainly between a forged and a good note, and hesitated to convict; after which it became impossible to prevent extensive frauds if the circulation of notes for £1 and £2 was continued.

all parties evinced. To estimate the amount of ruin arising out of this deplorable scene is quite impossible. It must, upon the whole, have been enormous. The commissions of bankruptcy against country bankers are stated at eighty in number; but several of the private metropolitan banks were compelled to suspend payment, some of which never resumed. It is only due, however, to the Directors of the Bank of England to record that, as soon as they felt themselves to be in comparative safety, they spared no exertions practicable to relieve the pervading commercial distress as far as liberal advances were capable of curing it.*

It may be safely asserted that the paper money catastrophe of 1825-6 was the cause of the destruction of Lord Liverpool's administration. He was, at the time, in a poor and declining state of health; and the shock caused by peril passed through, and by the anxiety arising out of his knowledge of the difficulty and weakness which the changes now inevitable must

* This is apparent in the amounts circulated by the bank in each week of December 1825.

Dates.	Notes of £5 and upwards.	Post Bills.	Notes under £5.	Totals.
	£	£	£	£
3	15,287,920	1,804,200	385,170	17,477,290
10	15,851,600	1,802,060	384,300	18,037,960
17	21,361,480	2,197,720	383,610	23,942,810
24	22,211,270	2,251,960	1,148,570	25,611,800
31	22,247,800	2,224,960	1,236,650	25,709,410

Appendix to Report of Secret Committee, p. 81.

entail upon his government, doubtless brought him and it together to their end. He indeed survived for about twelve months; but the embarrassments and responsibilities of his position were too much for a nervous valetudinarian, who is said to have confessed that for years he had "trembled to open a despatch," —and he died after struggling through the remainder of the disastrous year 1826, broken down by anxieties from which he saw no escape.

The session of parliament commenced on the 2d February 1826, the tone of the royal speech being, of necessity, the exact reverse of that which characterized the effusion of 1825. The unfortunate Chancellor of the Exchequer (Robinson) was certainly now in a dilemma by no means of an enviable nature. He had mistaken the rise of prices, caused by the respite of the one and two pound bank-notes, for a political millennium. He had next claimed the credit of this millennium for parliament, and attributed the whole glory of a brief prosperity to its collective wisdom. The imaginary millennium had now vanished, like a *Fata Morgana;* and, like "Dead-sea fruits," beautiful to the vision, had left behind only "bitter ashes." The unlucky chancellor was now to find somebody on whom to throw the blame of a catastrophe, to him at once so unexpected and so embarrassing; and for scape-goats he fixed upon the equally luckless country bankers, who had assuredly suffered enough, without this last "unkindest cut of all." In accordance with this resolve, the royal speech, on the opening of parliament, after deploring reverses some of the causes

of which, it asserted, were "beyond control," proceeded thus: "But to a certain portion of this evil correctives at least, if not effectual remedies, may be applied: and his majesty relies upon your wisdom to devise such measures as may tend to protect both public and private interests against the like sudden and violent fluctuations, by placing on a more firm foundation the currency and the circulating credit of the country."

The meaning of this paragraph was understood by all parties. It was now felt that, happen what might as the consequence of their removal, the circulation of small notes, unless the act of 1819 were repealed *in toto*, could not be continued, and that their extinction was now of necessity decreed. To dream of a repeal of the act of 1819 was out of the question; nor was there a single member who, after the terrible scenes of December and January, would have ventured to advocate the longer continuance of the small notes in company with the cash-payments act. There remained, therefore, only one course to be taken, without any possible alternative; and on the 10th of February accordingly, the House on the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer resolved itself into a committee on the Bank-Charter and Promissory-Notes Act, with only one road before it, and with no room, consequently, for anything like real discussion. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, after a long speech, in which he endeavoured to throw the whole *onus* of misfortune upon the cupidity and recklessness of the country bankers, and to make light of the depression which the extinction of the small

country paper was sure to produce, moved as a resolution :—

"That it is the opinion of this committee that all promissory notes, payable to bearer on demand, issued by licensed bankers in England or by the Bank of England, for any sum less than £5, bearing a date previous to the 5th February 1826, or which may have been stamped previously to that day, shall and may continue to be issued, re-issued, and circulated until the 5th day of April 1829, and no longer."

This resolution, which was the only one to which, under the immediate circumstances, the House could possibly come, was defended by Mr Peel, in an elaborate speech, and only impugned by those who, at the same time, deprecated the enormous injustice of the original act of 1819, and did not conceal their hopes that, in the end, its perennial inflictions would not be tolerated by the country. Mr Peel, however, to a certain extent, defended the country bankers from the imputation very recklessly cast upon them by others. Amongst these was the unfortunate Chancellor of the Exchequer, now universally known as "Mr Prosperity Robinson," who having for two years sung pæans in honour of the small-note system, and the monetary ease which it caused for a time, now went as far in the opposite direction, turned short round, and in words described the small paper of the country bankers as a nuisance, and themselves as men not fit to be trusted with so large a share of the circulation of the country. He had in his opening address announced his intention of proposing the repeal of the law which, at that

time, limited the partners of a country bank to six, and either giving charters or, by an act of the legislature, establishing joint-stock banking companies. In this proposal Mr Peel acquiesced; but with much good sense and good taste he rebutted the almost personal reflections upon country bankers, in which more than one speaker had, during the debate, indulged.

"Respecting these banks (said Mr Peel) the honourable member who preceded him (Mr Alderman Heygate) had stated a fact in which he found a strong presumption that the present system of country banks was very imperfect. The honourable member had declared that the issues of country bankers could hardly be estimated or foreseen; since one country banker might make an over-issue, because he could not know to what extent the issue was made by another. This fact seemed to have been stated by the honourable member as a vindication of the country banks. But that vindication was, in truth, not their blame, but the blame of the system—and of the system alone. The honourable member for Staffordshire had said, at the beginning of the debate, that the increased issue of bank-notes was not to be imputed as a fault to the country bankers, because it was the tendency of bank-notes to increase with the increase of prices. He (Mr Peel) agreed with the honourable baronet, the fault alluded to was *not* the fault of the bankers. It was not the fault of the individuals (hear, hear), but that of the system they were engaged in conducting,—a system that almost compelled them to assist in creating the evils of which the country justly complained. That honourable member's proposition, however, did not go far enough; for he might have added, that not only would the increase of notes follow increase of prices, but they would decrease with the same rapidity when prices fell; so that the tendency of this system was, in all cases, to aggravate the evils of the

country. It acted as a stimulus when excitement was at its height, and when the weakness consequent on fictitious excitement followed, it increased that weakness, and thus helped to increase the evils of panic."

Mr Peel, in short, saw that prices and issues act and react upon each other; issues producing higher prices, and these higher prices, by causing fresh transactions, occasioning more issues. In such a state of things, although a banker may discover in course of time that his discounts are out of proportion with those of his neighbours, no banker can determine whether the mass of transactions arises from real or fictitious demand; and hence, as long as his discounts are based upon regular transactions, he goes on without hesitation. To blame a banker for this, Mr Peel saw was absurd; and his defence is sufficient and complete. The difficulty is to conceive how Mr Peel, and the majority that supported the scheme of the Chancellor of Exchequer, came to imagine that any alteration in the mere constitution of the banks could cure this objection to the system; or how banks should become more prudently managed by being intrusted to directors, whose interest in caution might be trifling or even adverse.

Mr Peel was followed by the member for Callington (Mr M. Attwood), who evidently seized the occasion to attack, in a speech of great power, the whole monetary measures entered upon from and after 1819. Mr Attwood clearly showed that the pressure of 1822 was solely produced by the gradual diminution of the small paper circulation. He as manifestly proved that the ease and temporary prosperity of 1823–4–5 flowed

from the depreciation of the circulation during that period, and the consequent diminution of the weight of the financial burdens of the nation. He wound up by saying:—"High prices, then, and an abundant circulation, are necessary; yet neither can permanently exist in conjunction with the low price of gold which the act of 1819 attempts to fix. This was the source of all the difficulty; and all measures of relief founded on other views would, like those now proposed, only lead to evils more complicated and to greater dangers." Mr Attwood and his friends at this period manifestly had come to the conclusion that the final extinction of the small notes must, by the pressure so created, overset, by rendering intolerable, the act of 1819. He was not then aware how much a simple, patient, credulous, and industrious population may be gradually brought to suffer, when they cannot see the hand that presses, nor are able to understand the machinery under which they are pressed down. The resolution of Mr Robinson was passed without a division, no one deeming any other course at that moment possible; and the adoption of this resolution by the House in reality decided finally the fate of the small paper circulation in England, and virtually in Scotland, the continuance of small notes across the Border being in effect nugatory, except in so far as it adds a little to banking profits, the value of money in Scotland being necessarily the same as in England.

None of the topics which came before parliament during the session of 1826 perhaps equalled in actual importance and interest those debates which ended in

the enactment of a law for finally, in 1829, extinguishing that portion of the circulation from which had sprung effects so extraordinary. There were not wanting, however, subjects of great interest and of various complexion, amongst which may be classed the discussions as to the corn-laws and the debate on the state of the silk-trade.

It now began to be felt by the leaders in the House of Commons of the landed interest, that the bargain which in 1819 had been made with the party of Economists was somewhat of the nature of "a blind bargain." The experience of 1822 had taught the landlords generally, that under a currency regulated by a gold standard the mere prohibition of imports of grain until a certain price was reached would not, in even ordinary seasons, sustain wheat at a moderately remunerative price. They had also begun to perceive the extreme risk to which this sort of prohibitory system was exposed whenever a failure of crops compelled the opening of the ports to be resorted to; such relaxation always being followed by a struggle to prevent the re-imposition of the law on the part of the Economists generally, and the popular party who, at all risks, opposed any restriction on the importation of food. These opposite feelings gave rise to so many discussions, that it was now felt, on the part of Mr Peel and Mr Huskisson, who both advocated at that time the necessity as well as justice of some protection for the land, that it was expedient to seek for some modified measure, which should at once be conciliatory and efficient. Such was the result of the corn-law discussions of 1826; to which laws

the opponents of restriction were accustomed to attribute the whole or a great part of the commercial difficulty really caused by the money crisis of 1825–6, and the slow and gradual narrowing of the circulation which followed it. The debate which took place as to the depressed state of the silk-trade, which, in their turn, the advocates of a close system ascribed to a relaxation of the duties on foreign silks, assumed, however, a political importance incidentally.

The debate in question occurred on the 23d of February, which was early in the session, and arose out of a motion made by Mr Ellice, member for Coventry, for a select committee to inquire into the state of this trade, which was suffering under the general depression of the period. Mr Ellice was by no means an advocate for a system of close monopoly, but he argued that, whilst grain and meat were kept dear by law, it was the height of injustice to make silk cheap, and that the first step in free trade ought to be the free importation of grain and cattle. The *onus* of answering this address of Mr Ellice was given to Mr Huskisson, who performed his task with much ingenuity by stating various countervailing advantages which the silk-trade in this country possessed. He was followed by Mr Baring and several others, taking various views of the question, and the debate was about to close when somewhat unexpectedly the Secretary for Foreign Affairs rose. That Mr Canning's rising was at once interpreted as a political movement, the cheers which greeted the act sufficiently proved; and those who so read it were right, for the speech of the Foreign Secre-

tary was, in fact, the opening of a new page in the political scroll of time.

It has been already seen that a certain freedom of thinking, on subjects strictly economical and mercantile, had, as early as 1809, been apparent in the House of Commons, and also in the House of Peers. It was disguised under the garb of abstract science. It was carefully separated from politics; and it was professed by men of all parties in the state. This class of thinkers were soon termed "the Economists;" and amongst their number they had counted Peel, Canning, and Huskisson, as well as Horner, Ricardo, Hume, Lord Folkestone, and Sir Francis Burdett; and, in the House of Peers, Lord Lauderdale, as well as Lord King. When, however, the spirit of inquiry and speculation is once indulged, few men find it possible to confine it to a single subject, or to compel it to take one direction only. Dogma and philosophy are in fact things totally and entirely incompatible. Whether the dogmatic principle be that of arbitrary power or of arbitrary teaching, it must, to continue, be preserved in its integrity—"teres atque rotundus." If the wedge of speculation be once introduced, it is gradually driven further and further, until it rends the whole dogmatic structure. This truth was now to become a little more apparent in the Right Honourable George Canning; and this was the chosen time for that apparition.

Mr Canning had, by this time, satisfied himself that Lord Liverpool's health was in such a state as to render it impossible that, in his position of Premier, he should sustain the fatigue and wearing anxiety of

another session of parliament. Mr Canning had determined in his own mind to be Lord Liverpool's successor. In his path, however, there appeared still to be obstacles, which to a mind less pliable and astute would have seemed insurmountable; and to smooth that path, and evade those difficulties, was now his employment. In Mr Peel the Foreign Secretary knew he had a dangerous rival—dangerous in point of ability, and dangerous in the point of political connexions. To the statesmen of the old Tory school Mr Canning had been, during a long period, more or less distasteful. His versatility of genius made him at times unmanageable; and to this want of docility his dexterity in political intrigue and his self-confidence tended to add. In the persecutions of the unfortunate Caroline, Princess of Wales, he refused even to acquiesce; and in the disgraceful and most questionable scenes which began with her trial, and hardly ended with her sudden decease, he studiously refused to have any share. This was no way to gain the patronage or the confidence of either Lord Liverpool or Lord Eldon, who were again estranged and deeply chagrined by his advocacy of the claims of the Catholics, and at times embarrassed in their policy by his adhesion to some of the Free-trading doctrines of the Economical party. To Lords Liverpool and Eldon, and the Duke of Wellington, Mr Canning was therefore a necessity rather than a cordial ally, and tolerated by them rather than relished. In this light Mr Huskisson was also viewed; whilst to the high Tory aristocracy Mr Canning's want of high birth made him also distasteful; this section

of the supporters of Ministers being inclined to deem high talent without birth as a very questionable and dangerous basis on which to found claims to the higher honours of the state. To the objection of want of birth Mr Peel was equally liable. Indeed it is a question whether, in the eyes of the higher families, the reputed illegitimate offspring of a Peer was not preferable to the legitimate child of a spinner of cotton. In all else, however, Mr Peel had then the entire approbation of the high Tory party, and was no doubt viewed by the Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor as a future prop of their party and their policy.

The position of the Foreign Secretary, therefore, was precisely this: His experience and knowledge of the position and relative strength of parties had made him aware that, in the event of Lord Liverpool's retirement, Mr Peel, still a young man, could not form a government capable of maintaining itself with him in opposition. But he was likewise just as well convinced that he himself must not look to be the head of a government constituted under the auspices of Lord Eldon, the Duke of Wellington, and Mr Peel. Extrinsic aid was therefore to be obtained if Mr Canning was destined to form a cabinet of his own; and this he hoped to do by so far conciliating the Whig Economists and the Liberal party generally, as to induce them to coalesce with such of the more free-thinking Tories as he could attach to himself. The debate on the relaxation of the silk-duties afforded an opportunity to begin this career of marked conciliation, and it was adroitly seized. Mr John Williams, one of the

members for Lincoln, a borough under the influence of the Duke of Newcastle, and at that time a sort of appendage to the ducal head of the Pelhams, had attacked, in terms which might fairly be called virulent and coarse, the whole sect of Political Economists in the person of one of their principal authorities, Mr Huskisson. The opportunity was irresistible; and the Foreign Secretary adroitly put himself forward as the defender of a friend maligned, a *rôle* in which he could, under colour of outraged feelings, make use of terms somewhat stronger than an ordinary occasion would have permitted.

"Sir (said the right honourable Secretary for Foreign Affairs), when this attack was made, the House felt as one man the injustice done to my right honourable friend (Mr Huskisson); and if, in addition to the conscious rectitude of his own mind, and to the gratifying acknowledgment by this House of his splendid exertions, he wished for another gratification, he had it in the universal feeling of indignation at the attempt, so wantonly made, to lower him and his measures in public opinion. And then, forsooth, came the assertion, that 'nothing personal was meant.' Nothing personal, sir! Did we not all hear mention made of 'hard-hearted metaphysics,' and of 'the malignity of the devil?' Nothing personal! Certainly nothing personal to the devil, who, by the way—and it is a curious coincidence—is, according to an old proverb, the patron saint of the city which the honourable and learned gentleman represents. (Laughter.) But could any one fail to understand that the fiendlike malignity, the coldness of heart, the apathy of feeling, that all those abstract qualities which the learned gentleman has described as the distinguishing features of those who indulged in abstract speculations, were intended to be embodied in the person of my right honourable friend—qualities

especially calculated to render a man contemptible in the performance of his public duties, and odious in the eyes of his fellow-citizens? These topics, sir, are as vulgar as they are unjust. Why is it to be supposed that the application of philosophy—for I will use the odious word—why is it to be supposed that to apply the refinements of philosophy to the affairs of life indicates obduracy of feeling or obtuseness of sensibility? Sir, we must deal with affairs of men on abstract principles of some kind, modified, of course, by times and by circumstances. * * * * * *

Sir, I have not to learn that there is a faction in the country. (Loud cries of No! no!) I do not mean a political faction. (Hear, hear.) I should rather have said it was a sect—a sect small in numbers and powerless in might—who think that all advances towards improvement are retrogradations towards Jacobinism! These people seem to imagine that under no possible circumstances an honest man can endeavour to keep his country upon a line with the progress of political knowledge, and to adapt its course to the varying circumstances of the world. Such an attempt is branded as an indication of mischievous intention—ay, as evidence of a design to sap the foundations of the greatness of the country!

"Sir, I consider it to be the duty of a British statesman, in *internal* as well as *external* affairs, to hold a middle course between extremes, avoiding alike the extravagances of despotism and the licentiousness of an unbridled freedom, reconciling power with liberty, not adopting hasty or ill-advised experiments, or pursuing airy and unsubstantial theories, but not rejecting the application of sound and wholesome knowledge to practical affairs, and pressing with sobriety and caution into the service of his country any generous and liberal principles, whose excess may indeed be dangerous, but whose foundation is in truth. This, sir, in my mind, is the true conduct of a British statesman; and they, sir, who resist indiscriminately all improvement as innovation, may find themselves compelled

at last to submit to innovations which are not improvements! (Loud cheers, and cries of Hear, hear, hear!)"

Hansard's Debates, New Series, vol. xiv. p. 854.

It is impossible to misunderstand the tendency of this artful address, or not to see at whom it was really aimed. The speaker here draws a distinct line between himself and that party of whom Lord Eldon was the organ in the House of Peers and Mr Peel in the House of Commons; and he does it in such a way as to conciliate and open an avenue for junction with those of the liberal party who would take a few grains of concession as an instalment, and be content to wait for more. That Mr Peel must have felt "the wind taken out of his sails" by this adroit manœuvre, cannot be doubted. That he, as well as his colleague, saw the set of the tide of opinion at that time, seems now equally unquestionable; but he was in a position still more embarrassing than that of Mr Canning. He was a much younger man. His hold upon the House of Commons was not by any means like that of his colleague. A single false step might render him suspected where he was now trusted, and this without advancing him a single step in the better opinion of those who now opposed him. He preserved therefore a cautious silence, and by his vote merely aided the majority which sanctioned the economical measures of Mr Huskisson on this occasion.

The effect of this move on the part of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs soon became apparent. From that time a marked line of distinction was drawn between Mr Can-

ning and Mr Peel. The first was hailed by the liberal party as a man in a position not natural to him—as a man of enlarged mind, hampered by the narrow notions and contemptible prejudices of others—in short, as a mind which experience might convince and reason might persuade; whilst, by the same parties, Mr Peel was set down as an unreasoning incarnation of High Church and High Tory bigotry—as the child and champion of the Holy Alliance, and as a man whose sole political ideas resided in the ascendency of a few great families, and in the aggrandizement of the Church of England as the strongest engine of arbitrary power. Mr Peel, however, was not the only sufferer by this clever movement of Mr Canning: its effects were felt by Lord Liverpool and the whole ministry in an additional degree of weakness. The ministers speedily felt that they were losing ground in a House of Commons by many of whom Canning was now regarded—whether with pleasure or not—as "the coming man;" and what Peel and Liverpool lost, the Foreign Secretary gained. These symptoms, no doubt, determined the ministers upon that dissolution of parliament which took place in 1826. It was probably seen, both by Lord Liverpool and by Mr Peel, that a longer delay would only decrease the chances of additional strength to be gained by the effort of a general election. A partial restoration of confidence, after the crisis of the early part of the year, had indeed taken place; but it was a very imperfect restoration. The directors of the Bank of England and the country bankers, together with all the dealers in money of every kind, smarting

under enormous losses, and still more under the blame undeservedly cast upon them by those who wished to hide their own ignorance under imputations of ignorance to others, now acted with an excess of caution. Prices, therefore, did not and could not recover to any great extent. The extinction of the small notes in England from and after May 1829 was doomed by act of parliament. The country bankers, wishing to come gradually to this catastrophe, re-issued either sparingly or not at all; and the consequence was, a languor, a want of demand, and a dereliction of profits, which every turn of the monetary screw was sure to augment. Such were the views, probably, under which parliament was dissolved; at all events, such were the views under which common sense would counsel a dissolution.

The general election of the autumn of 1826, to some small extent, answered the ministerial expectations; but this was only to a trifling extent. In Ireland, where the speech of the Duke of York and the repeated rejection by the Peers of all plans for the emancipation of the Catholics had excited intense exasperation, the most violent exertions were made to return pro-catholic candidates. Mr. O'Connell was now the undisputed leader of the Catholic Association, and of the multitudes who, year after year, flocked to its standard and augmented its strength. This gentleman had evidently, very early in his career, really abandoned all hope of carrying his measures through the force of moral persuasion; and at times, during the strong excitement of a moment, he did not pre-

vent the expression of his convictions from escaping him. It was clear that Mr O'Connell had not the slightest reliance either upon the justice or wisdom of a British cabinet or of the British people. English politics he certainly never understood, or, at all events, never would understand. He on almost every occasion, when the wrongs of Ireland were concerned, treated the British public as the accomplice with the government for the time being; and he never violated this rule until he deemed it convenient to denounce the people of England for disagreeing with their rulers, with whom he had, at length, affected to agree! The general Irish election of 1826 was therefore conducted by O'Connell, on the part of the Catholics, with as little heed of public opinion in England, as if it were useless to regard that opinion. The Catholic clergy, who had hitherto maintained some real and some apparent reserve, now openly and violently interfered. Religious bigotry and fanaticism were unscrupulously enlisted on the side of party politics. Neither side abstained from this; but, in the hands of a Catholic clergy, amidst the miserable population of Ireland, the terrors of superstition are made to act with tenfold force; and thus it was in the election of 1826.

The Catholic priesthood, who now took counsel freely with Mr O'Connell, interfered in the most effectual manner. Every Catholic who would not, or could not, vote for Emancipation candidates was anathematized; and such was the effect of these denunciations, that many counties and boroughs, under the influence formerly of the most powerful families, were rescued

from that influence by means of another equally questionable in its nature. These novel proceedings in Ireland, however, it soon appeared had produced reaction in England. Timid persons, who had persuaded themselves that the spiritual weapons of the Church of Rome were now blunted, again took the alarm, and, in disgust at "comminations" thundered from the hustings, turned short round upon the cause they had ventured to support. The result therefore was found to be, that the Catholic party had lost, and the Liverpool ministry gained, some strength, but not enough to alter materially the relative position of parties.

The new parliament was called together for despatch of business on the 14th November 1826, when commercial and agricultural distress, together with complaints of the corn-laws, and schemes for their repeal or modification, formed the engrossing topics of debate. In truth, the feeling against the existing corn-law was now so strong, many of the party of Economists endeavouring to trace the depression of trade to this prohibitory law as to the imports of grain, that the landlords felt that no time was to be lost in stemming the tide of discontent. An amendment, in the shape of an addition to the address, was therefore moved by Mr Western, as follows:—"Your Majesty's faithful Commons feel it to be their duty to represent to your Majesty, and at the same time to express their deep regret, that the agricultural classes, though not suffering in the degree they did a few years ago, particularly in the year 1822, are yet in a severe pressure of distress from the heavy burdens to

which they are exposed. They will endeavour to trace the causes which have led to the dreadful alternations of prosperity and adversity which all the industrious classes have experienced since the termination of the war in 1815; and they trust they shall discover the means of restoring the agriculture, commerce, and manufactures of the country to the same condition of progressive improvement in which they were steadily advancing antecedently to that." This was an adroit insinuation that narrowing of the paper circulation was the real cause of the decline of prices and want of demand, and not the corn-law, which, however unjust and impolitic, cannot affect the condition of a country to the extent to which alterations rapidly made in the value of money must always do. The amendment was negatived without a division; but it was the opening of another fruitless campaign on the part of the opponents of the act of 1819, so fraught with injustice and ruin.

The ministers, though urged to admit the Houses to some knowledge of their fiscal intentions as to the two momentous subjects of currency and corn, resolved to postpone until the earlier months of 1827 any discussion on these questions, or on the still more pressing question of Catholic disabilities. Early in the year 1827, however, two casualties were to occur, which were destined to change totally the aspect of politics, and in doing so to give rise to a series of intrigues of a more singular and more questionable nature than is generally exhibited even by political machinations. On the 12th February 1827, Lord

Liverpool moved in the House of Lords an address of condolence to his Majesty on the death, after a few months of lingering illness, of the heir presumptive to the throne, his Royal Highness the Duke of York, one of the most influential and steady opponents of concessions to the Catholics. Five days after, Lord Liverpool was himself struck down by apoplexy, and consequent paralysis, which in one moment ended his political career, although he lingered for some time, and left him a pitiable wreck in mind and body; not unexpectedly to those who had opportunities for close observation, but quite so to the nation, upon whom the event came like a thunder-clap.

It has often been observed that, in difficult times, mediocrity maintains an ascendency much longer than high talent. This is because mediocrity is less obnoxious to the opposing parties than is genius; and, by being allowed to attempt a little, it contrives to accomplish much. Lord Liverpool was perhaps the last British minister who can be said to have governed upon the principles of high Toryism, and this he did only by holding them *cum grano salis*, and by the dubious system of leaving "open" cabinet-questions on which his cleverer colleagues could not agree. By this means, after Lord Castlereagh's death, he secured the services of Canning with Peel, and made Mr Robinson Chancellor of the Exchequer, after the elevation to the Peers of Vansittart, Lord Bexley. These heterogeneous materials, however, being thrown loose by his sudden death, it became a matter of extreme difficulty to form a ministry out of them. Besides the *vexata questio* of Catholic

relief, so many new lights in economics and foreign policy had arisen, that it was hardly possible to find three politicians who agreed on all the leading topics of the day; and this being the case, from that hour the King (George IV.) was involved in a maze of cross-purposes with his ministers, from which, after three years of vexation and anxiety, death only relieved him.

Lord Eldon, who was now the almost sole remaining stay of high Toryism, saw from the first the perplexities and embarrassments to which Lord Liverpool's political demise would give rise. On the 18th February 1827, he writes to his daughter, Lady Bankes, "He (Lord Liverpool) is a very little, perhaps a shade, better to-day, but his life is very uncertain, and it is *quite certain* that as an official man he is no more. This is a most tremendous blow, *under present circumstances*, to the public, and its effects on individuals must be important. Heaven knows who will succeed." The crisis was certainly a very extraordinary one. Eldon and Peel wanted, if they could, to reconstitute the Liverpool cabinet, by putting some peer equal to the emergency in the place of the Premier, and retaining the subordinates in the posts which they then occupied. In the meantime, however, Canning, whose ambition now carried him away, was moving heaven and earth to thwart these views, and to attach a portion of the Liberal party to himself on some terms. These intrigues, and the difficulties attending them, consumed much time. About the end of March or the first week of April, Lord Eldon says—"There is *still*

some uncertainty, or seems to be, whether Lord Lansdowne and a few Whigs *have* joined Mr Canning; but it *will* be so, I have no doubt. The whole conversation in this town is made up of abusive, bitterly abusive, talk of people about each other. All fire and flame. I have known nothing like it."

On the 9th April, near the same time, Mr Peel writes to Lord Eldon, "My earnest wish is to see the present government retained in his Majesty's service, on the footing on which it stood before Lord Liverpool's misfortune. I am content with my own position, and I wish for no advancement or change. Differing on the Catholic question from every one of my colleagues in the government who is a member of the House of Commons, still I have been enabled to act cordially with them, and much to my satisfaction, on other matters. I esteem and respect them, and should consider it a great misfortune were his Majesty to lose the services of any one of them, but particularly of Canning." He then proceeds to inform Lord Eldon that, although he was willing to act as a co-subordinate with Mr Canning, under some peer who should succeed Lord Liverpool, he could not consent to act as a subordinate under Mr Canning, giving as his reason their difference as to the question of Catholic Emancipation. The peer thought of was evidently the Duke of Wellington; but to this scheme Mr Canning took care to put a stop. He was determined, by raising obstacles to all other schemes of administration, to render his own a sort of state-necessity, and leave the King no alternative. He accordingly pretended that in his opinion the Duke's

influence with the army, and the fact of his being then Commander-in-Chief (as successor to the Duke of York), were totally incompatible with the idea of his becoming Prime Minister. This was evidently a device to get rid of Wellington; for although the Duke had himself rashly admitted his unfitness for such a trust, he did not found his own incapacity upon the fact of any supposed influence with the army, which, after all, was very doubtful, rigid disciplinarians seldom being favourites. Thus, therefore, this clever intriguer check-mated the high Tory party on both sides. By pretending to object to the Duke, he kept out Peel, who, as he well knew, would not come in without the Duke, and so got rid of two enemies and rivals at once. No other peer of the high Tory camp was eligible. Peel and Wellington, conjunctly, could not go on with Canning in opposition. Thus, therefore, where but to him could the King turn to form an administration, which Mr Canning made sure of doing by aid of the Whigs, both being willing to make the concessions requisite to obtain place and power.

Whilst these complicated and not very consistent nor honourable intrigues were going forward, Lord Liverpool, although now imbecile both in mind and body, having still life, and being nominally prime minister, the business of the session went languidly on, the expectants of office on all sides being perplexed in the extreme by the "dead lock" which the art of Canning had brought about.

On the 5th March 1827, the question of relief to the Catholics was again brought before the House by Sir

Francis Burdett, and debated throughout two nights by a very full House. During the course of this debate, both Mr Peel and Mr Canning spoke at great length, but of course without much novelty of argument, against and for the resolution moved by Sir Francis Burdett. The conclusion of Mr Peel's address was significant.

"He had felt (he said) that he had no choice but to state with firmness—he trusted, without asperity—the principles which his reason dictated, and which his honour and conscience compelled him to maintain. The influence of some great names had lately been lost to the cause which he supported; but he had never adopted his opinions upon it either from deference to high station, or that which might more fairly be expected to impress him, high ability. Keen as the feelings of regret must be with which the loss of those associates in feeling was recollected, it was still a matter of consolation to him that he had now an opportunity of showing his adherence to those tenets which he had formerly espoused—of showing that, if his opinions were *unpopular*, he stood by them still when the influence and authority that had given them currency were gone; and when it was impossible (he believed) that in the mind of any human being he could stand suspected of advocating these principles *with any view to favour or to personal aggrandizement.*"

Hansard's Debates, New Series, vol. xvi. p. 980.

That Mr Peel had, at this period, come to the conclusion that a continuation of the Liverpool cabinet was impossible, seems palpable enough. That he now entirely despaired of repelling the demands of the Irish Catholics much longer, is also to be inferred. He expressed plainly to Lord Eldon, in a letter written

some few weeks after this debate, his apprehension of "the danger" of a cabinet upon exclusively Protestant principles, supposing such a thing then possible. It seems clearly to follow, therefore, that the utmost which could, in Mr Peel's apprehension, now be prudently done, was to follow a mixed system of repulsion and conciliation, so as to let disappointment always be tempered by hope. He evidently now saw that the great obstacle in the way of a Catholic triumph and the ascendency of Canning, was the personal antipathy of the King to further concession. George IV., for what reason it is impossible to say, was imbued with as deep a degree of hatred and fear of the Catholic religion as ever actuated his father George III., or his brother the Duke of York. He had, indeed, more carefully concealed it. He had so shaped his conduct when in Ireland as to lead the Catholics to believe that he was at heart favourable to relaxation of the penal laws; but this was only in accordance with his practice, which was to suit his promise to the interest of the hour, and forget it when that hour had passed. This, no doubt, Mr Peel well knew; and hence it is to be inferred he saw that Mr Canning's chief difficulty would be found to be with the King, whom he must either persuade to throw off the High Church party, or pacify by himself deserting the Catholics. That Mr Canning was bent on power, all men felt; and he could hardly hope to attain it without a postponement at best of this irritating question. Sir Francis Burdett's motion was lost by four on a division, which, though it did not really alter the position of the cause,

was hailed as a victory by the High Church party, and probably was not displeasing to Mr Canning in his then relative situation.

Whilst the Irish Catholics were being exasperated by a result so little accordant with their expectations, a similar scene of cross-purposes was exhibited in the proceedings relative to the proposed change in the principle of the corn-laws. Before the fatal illness of Lord Liverpool, a bill had been framed under the auspices of Mr Huskisson, and generally assented to by the then cabinet, the object of which was to alter entirely the principle of these laws. Experience had now taught all who were teachable at all upon such questions, that merely to prohibit imports of grain until scarcity prices had been reached, would not, under a currency based on the gold standard enacted by the measure of 1819, [illegible]ce to keep grain high. This the prices of 1822–3, which was not a period of great plenty, had shown; and Mr Huskisson saw that the only method of preserving grain at a level likely to satisfy the landed interest, was to concoct some machinery to enable grain to be constantly "gambled up," by means of a system of averages, to a point much above that which the relation of supply to demand would authorize or sanction. In order to attain this end, the "sliding scale" was devised, one of the most ingenious pieces perhaps of legal mechanism ever invented by a legislator.* In addition to this sliding

* This scale, proposed by Mr Canning, was the invention of Mr Huskisson, and became the foundation of all the modified scales adopted afterwards. Nothing was ever more admirably adapted to

scale, by virtue of which the duty decreased as prices rose, and rose as prices fell, it was intended to encourage the warehousing of grain under bond, under all states of the market, such warehoused grain to be cleared out at the duties and prices laid down by the scale, the object of this being to encourage the deposit in this country of a constant stock of foreign grain, as a resource at hand against great failures in the home crops. This warehousing clause, however, was the cause of the failure of the bill in the House of Peers,

the end in view. The resolutions as to wheat, barley, and oats, are these :—

WHEAT.—Whenever the average price of wheat, made up and published in the manner required by law, shall be 60s. and under 61s. the quarter, the duty shall be for every quarter £1; and in respect of every integral shilling by which such price shall be above 60s., such duty shall be decreased by 2s. until such price shall be 70s. Whenever such price shall be 70s., the duty shall be for every quarter 1s. Whenever such price shall be under 60s., the duty shall be for every quarter £1, 2s.; and in respect of each integral shilling, or any part of each integral shilling, by which such price shall be under 59s., such duty shall be increased by 2s.

BARLEY, when the average was 30s. the duty was 10s., to decrease 1s. 6d. for every shilling of advance until 37s. was attained. To increase by 1s. 6d. for every shilling of fall below 30s.

OATS.—When the average was 21s., the duty to be 7s.; to decrease for every shilling of advance above 21s. by 1s. until 28s. was attained; and to increase by 1s. for every shilling of fall below 21s. The *minimum* duty was 1s. on all kinds of grain.

The effect of all such scales is to render it the interest of a large and unscrupulous class of men, by working the averages, and by fictitious sales and other devices, to gamble up the prices of grain above the level which the relation of supply to demand would naturally produce, and thus share the profit with the landed interest.

where, after the accession of Mr Canning to office as premier, the Duke of Wellington, whether by mistake or design seems somewhat uncertain, moved a clause prohibiting the warehousing of grain until wheat should be 66s. per quarter, and other kinds in proportion. The Lords, who were apprehensive of the effects of this *entrepôt* for grain, and who were in many instances vexed to the highest degree by the elevation to power of a man whom they considered a sort of half plebeian adventurer, and glad to thwart him by any means, willingly carried the clause, which involved the withdrawal of the bill. Mr Robinson, who had been elevated under Mr Canning's auspices to the House of Peers as Lord Goderich, immediately withdrew it, and a temporary measure of a similar nature was carried in its stead, the transaction giving rise to a correspondence between the Duke of Wellington and Mr Huskisson, which by no means cleared up the conduct of the former, but which occasioned a secret grudge, of which Mr Huskisson afterwards felt the effects. The transaction was, in truth, full of suspicious circumstances. It was obvious that the Duke of Wellington, however he might disclaim the idea, had nourished some intention of replacing Lord Liverpool. Mr Canning was especially distasteful to him; and Mr Huskisson having, imprudently no doubt, put him into a position in which the imputation of treachery could only be cured by the supposition of something very nearly approaching stupidity, a secret enmity was the result, which afterwards showed itself after a fashion

which only proved that Wellington, like Napoleon, could sometimes act a little part.

In the meantime the well-contrived manœuvres of Mr Canning had check-mated all his opponents. He had left to the King no alternative but either to throw himself upon the Whigs, whom he had mortally offended by his recent desertion, and who had as mortally offended him by their resentment for that desertion, or take Mr Canning upon such terms as might be palatable. Upon this George IV. decided; and by making the Catholic question an open one, as it had long been under Lord Liverpool, and pledging himself to resist any repeal of the test and corporation act, or any reform in the representative system, Mr Canning was empowered to form a government, which he did in the knowledge that he carried with him Lord Goderich (Mr Robinson) and Mr Huskisson, and in the full reliance of finding aid amongst the more pliable Whigs, who were now willing to get a share of power on almost any terms. Finding Mr Canning thus master of the situation, Lord Eldon, Mr Peel, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Melville, and other more subordinate members of the Liverpool administration, reluctantly sent their resignations to the King, and Mr Canning at once proceeded to find tenants for the vacant situations, in which he completely succeeded. He himself held the united offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mr Robinson, created Lord Goderich, became Secretary for the Colonies, and took his influence into the

Upper House; whilst the Chancellorship was conferred upon the Master of the Rolls, Copley, a recent convert to Tory principles—a man who, to the skill of a consummate lawyer, added the talents of an accomplished orator, and who, if less honest, perhaps, in his new notions than Lord Eldon in his old ones, was little less intolerant. The place of First Lord of the Admiralty, vacant by the resignation of Lord Melville, was not filled up; but the new Premier was astute enough to prevail upon the easy good nature and pecuniary needs of the Duke of Clarence to accept the revived office of Lord High Admiral; thus strengthening his position by the adhesion of the Heir presumptive to the throne. The Foreign and Home Offices were filled by Lord Dudley and Ward and Mr Sturges Bourne; and Lord Bexley, at the King's request, withdrew his resignation. Thus Mr Canning's cabinet was principally completed from his own political friends; whilst from such of the Whig and Radical parties as expected, or feigned to expect, good to arise from this change of policy, he relied upon obtaining aid. His foreign policy, indefensible in reality as it was in some particulars, had made him popular with the professors of liberality of principle; and upon this, in fact, he relied for favour out of the immediate pale of his own followers.

Although Mr Canning's accession to power was remarked at the time principally for the mortification and effervescence which it occasioned in the circles of high Toryism, and for the not very explicable but

sudden favour with which it was regarded by many to whom the Premier had made himself obnoxious, yet it only needs a little of calm reflection to see that it was *de facto* a great political event. It was, in truth, the first decisive symptom of the decadence of that great and united party which for half a century had ruled this country with a power all but absolute, and never shaken but for a moment, but from which the support of opinion was now, and had been for some time, slowly and imperceptibly ebbing.

By those who contemplate the history of this party, it will readily be admitted that it is characterized by splendid acquisitions balanced by enormous losses, and by brilliant triumphs gained at the cost of immense sacrifices. But of national triumphs the gain and the glory are often transitory, whilst the burdens they entail are perennial. Such was the case here; and in addition to this, the whole financial policy after the year 1815 was such as to render these burdens heavier and more irritating to a people who, thirsting for the blessings of peace, had found it, most unexpectedly, more difficult to bear than the darkest periods of that war then brought to so glorious a conclusion. As discontents become strong, government must become weak; and these discontents were fanned into flame by party writers, whom recent events had enabled to avail themselves of a press more free than any press had ever been in England at any period since the invention of printing. Such were the causes of the disunion and debility of a party which, under the leadership of the younger

Pitt, was irresistible, but which, in the hands of his successors, fell to pieces like the latter empire of the Cæsars; and such were the springs of the power and popularity of George Canning, anomalous as they were, and unfounded in any sober calculation of honest and direct policy or common sense.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr Canning Premier—Conduct of the Whigs—Its Causes—Mr Peel's probable Views—His Explanations—Mr Dawson's Violence—Mr Brougham's Explanations—Mr Canning's Defence—Its Art—Mr Dawson again attacks the Ministerialists—Mr Peel's Dissatisfaction—He censures the Whigs—Sir Francis Burdett replies—Mr Canning defies the Opposition—Real Motives of all Parties—Earl Grey censures the Whigs and attacks Mr Canning—Irritation of Canning—His Difficulties—Report of Mr Peel's Committee on Increased Crime—His Criminal Law Reforms—Canning promises a Finance Committee—Prorogues Parliament—His Death and Character—His Foreign Policy—Its real Nature—Lord Goderich Minister—Greek War—Russian Policy—Navarino—Lord Goderich retires on Plea of ill Health.

MR CANNING had now reached the height of his ambition; and the scene of his first entering the House of Commons as premier is well described by Hansard:—

"The House was crowded to excess; and such of the members as could not find accommodation below, resorted to the galleries. To these were added several peers and reverend prelates, whose curiosity had induced them to be present at this opening act of the new administration. The Bishops of Bath and Wells and of Lichfield and Coventry sat in the right hand gallery, and near them the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl Fitzwilliam, and Lord Seaford, whilst in the opposite gallery were observed the Marquisses Aylesbury and Sligo, the Earls Cowper, Hardwicke, Darnley, Caernarvon, and Roden, and

Lords Bexley, Farnham, and Ravensworth. About five o'clock Mr Canning entered, and took the seat which he usually occupied. Immediately behind him sat Sir Francis Burdett and Mr Tierney. Mr Brougham walked up the ministerial side, and took his seat on the third of that side. Near him sat Mr Calcraft, Sir John Newport, and Lord Stanley, Sir Robert Wilson, and Mr Spring Rice. Mr Hobhouse retained his seat on the second opposition bench, and Mr Hume remained firm in that he has generally occupied. Mr Peel and Mr Goulburn took up their stations on the second row of seats between the treasury bench and the bar."

This singular scene took place on the 1st of May 1827, and it affords one proof amongst many others of how little value are party professions or political creeds. It is almost impossible to believe that the reasons for their conduct given by either party were the true reasons; but there was a necessity for making pretexts occupy the place of facts. It seems very manifest that Sir Francis Burdett and the Whigs who aided the premier did so from the hope alone of breaking up by this means the once compact and united Tory party; but it did not suit them to own it. The pretext was the Catholic question; yet everybody knew that Mr Canning had obtained power by pledging himself *not* to do anything to advance that question, and that his position with regard to it was worse than before. He had, indeed, obtained a sort of popularity by assuming a tone with regard to foreign governments by no means consistent with his maxims at home; and he thus at last originated a foreign policy which his successors have for the most part imitated. But that policy was scarcely then developed; and it

is still a question whether, on calm and unbiassed reflection, it can be recommended, or even justified. On the other side, Mr Peel was just as awkwardly placed as were Sir Francis Burdett and Mr Brougham. He too was compelled to make the Catholic question a stalking-horse; whilst everybody felt that he resigned because, although he was willing to serve with Canning under the Duke of Wellington, he could not bring himself to serve under Canning. Hence, although it was believed at that moment that Mr Peel, like Sir Francis Burdett, was convinced that the Catholic claims could not with safety be much longer resisted, he was compelled to speak of that question's success as a matter to which he never could, under any circumstances, be personally accessory—a grave and mischievous mistake in a statesman, by whom, in times of mutation, nothing ought to be held as absolutely impossible.

On the motion of a new writ for the borough of Ashburton, for which Mr Sturges Bourne was member, Mr Peel rose to make an exposition of his motives for quitting office. Whatever might be Mr Peel's real feelings on this occasion, they were successfully repressed. His explanation was calm, measured, and altogether dispassionate, and only failed in this, that he was forced by his position to speak of the Catholic question in terms less ambiguous than any, perhaps, which he had hitherto used. He entirely denied that there was any concert between himself and Lord Eldon and the other ministers, who, at the same time, sent in their resignations. The imputation of factious mo-

tives he utterly disclaimed, and consequently put upon his peculiar position with regard to the Catholics the whole onus of his retreat from office; and necessarily feigned to believe that this question, which it was totally out of Mr Canning's power to forward, was never in so fair a way towards success.

"The opinions which I have always held (said the right honourable gentleman) on this question I still retain; and I thought that, having always avowed them, and having always taken an active, perhaps I may say important, part against the Catholics, that I could not remain in office after events had rendered it probable that I should be the single minister of the crown likely to continue so opposed.

"I say, sir, under these circumstances, I did not feel that it was consistent with the course I had pursued, or with the maintenance of my character as a public man, to acquiesce in arrangements which would benefit myself by enabling me to hold office, which, however, I could not do without acting in a manner calculated materially to promote the successful termination of a question to which, under other circumstances and political aspects, I had offered the most determined resistance. Under these circumstances, and considering the nature of the opposition which I had always offered to all proposed concessions to the Roman-catholics, I felt myself bound to act as I have done.

"Sir (continued Mr Peel) the nature of that opposition was such as to allow of no middle course (hear, hear). It was founded upon the belief, which I have always sincerely entertained, that the removal of those barriers which the law opposed to the attainment of political power by Roman-catholics was inconsistent with the maintenance of the constitution, and with the welfare and even safety of the church. These being the grounds on which I have always hitherto acted, I say, sir,

that I am now in the judgment of the House and of the country whether I had not sufficient ground to decline being a party to arrangements which were calculated decidedly to *promote* that object which I had so opposed."

After a variety of observations as to the invidiousness of the position of any individual who retains a place in a cabinet the majority of whom dissent from his opinions on so vital a matter, Mr Peel thus continued:—

"After the opinions I have avowed, and after the course I have for many years taken, I fairly own that there would have been no inconsiderable difficulties in the way of my accepting office under my right honourable friend. But the peculiarity of my situation depends not merely upon the opinions I have avowed—not merely on the nature of the resistance I have offered to the Catholic claims—not merely on the prominence of the part I have taken on that question, but upon the fact that, for the last eleven or twelve years, I have held two situations intermixing me with the administration of every Irish question; for on me has devolved the whole responsibility, whether as Chief Secretary for Ireland, or as Secretary of State for the Home Department. The relation in which I stood to the Prime Minister, from the nature of the office I lately held, I knew presented what I may justly venture to term an insuperable obstacle. Being now in the ranks of private life, and under no restraint of official reserve, I must fairly state that *for a long period I only have been considered responsible for the affairs of Ireland.* I was the only minister of the crown in this House who took the views which I entertained of the Catholic claims; and I have been thus placed in a situation not only of difficulty and embarrassment, but in a situation in which, let me say, no minister ought to be placed."

Mr Peel concluded a long and able account of his

motives and acts by reiterating his assertion that he was not acquainted with the intentions of Lord Eldon and the Duke of Wellington, and by briefly alluding to his conduct as Home Secretary, and his desire to ameliorate the criminal code of the country. After a short speech from Mr Duncombe, who insisted that the Prime Minister was now bound to carry the Catholic measures, Sir Francis Burdett defended his own conduct and that of the Whigs, who, with him, were supporting the new administration; and here Mr Peel had given him a vantage-ground of which he adroitly availed himself. "If (said Sir Francis) the prospects of the Catholics are so much improved by the present arrangement as to justify the honourable gentleman in his resignation, then by the same reasoning we, on this side, who are favourable to the claims of our Catholic fellow-subjects, are justified in supporting that arrangement;—a home thrust, which it was impossible to parry. To Sir Francis Burdett succeeded Mr George Dawson, a near relative of Mr Peel, who attacked the new government in passionate and unmeasured terms, and in the tone of a man who has been disappointed in some great expectations, rather than in that of one who impartially criticises the conduct of others:—

"He (Mr Dawson) was quite convinced (he said) that in the whole of this business, the gentlemen who occupied the opposition benches, but who had now joined the ministry, had only done so to occupy a ministerial station and enjoy ministerial authority (a laugh). He himself did not regret that he had

quitted the service of the crown, since he had done so for the reasons so ably and eloquently given by his right honourable friend (Mr Peel), who had most honourably preferred principle to the retention of the high station he had left. The honourable baronet (Sir F. Burdett) had expressed his hope that the Catholic question would be carried by means of the present cabinet; and it was his duty, entertaining the opinions he professed, and it was the duty of those who held those opinions along with him, to *insist* that the cabinet should propose the concession of the Catholic claims as a government measure (laughter); if they did not, the honourable baronet and his honourable friends would be parties to the basest coalition that ever was formed (hear, hear, and loud laughter). He would repeat it—the basest—the most unnatural coalition that this country ever witnessed;—one that exhibited the grossest abandonment of principle" (another laugh).

Mr Brougham, who followed Mr George Dawson, denied that he ever expected the Catholic question to be taken up by the new government; but he asserted that the position of the Catholics was much improved by the change which had taken place, and that this was a matter of necessity arising out of the circumstances. He could give a general support, he affirmed, to Mr Canning's government, because, though differences existed, it was not, as the former cabinet had been, absolutely hostile to the public interests at home and abroad, but the contrary. He stood there to warn the Catholics not to fall into the

very palpable trap set for them by the honourable gentleman who preceded him. Let them wait until the new government was consolidated; after which their claims would be discussed under auspices infinitely more favourable than had ever before attended them.

Mr Canning followed Mr Brougham; and the position he appears to have taken was, that the formation of a new government was almost forced upon him. He asserted his willingness to have stood aside in order that the formation of a ministry entirely anti-Catholic might be accomplished. He moreover, as he said, assured the King that though the construction of such a cabinet might be difficult, it was by no means impossible. This attempt not having been made, however, Mr Canning's wish was, according to his own account, to reconstruct Lord Liverpool's cabinet as nearly as possible. This attempt was frustrated, he asserted, by the singular fatality or coincidence of six resignations of anti-Catholic members of Lord Liverpool's ministry reaching his majesty at one and the same moment. After this, no alternative remained (the idea of an anti-Catholic cabinet being abandoned as perilous, if not impracticable) but to construct a government on a fresh basis. With regard to the position of the Catholic claims the Premier thus expressed himself:—"The opposition have declared their intention to support me. And why? Because they see the very same thing about to come to pass as the right honourable gentleman (Mr Peel); that, without stirring, as I have said, a single step in the advocacy of the cause they have espoused, my mere

existence where I am is an unquestionable advance in their object (hear, hear, hear). If it be so, as it is, I cannot help it. I am ready to anticipate the advantages it confers. But surely my right honourable friend is not here to contend that a reason which has been good for him is bad for them."

That these explanations should be of little power to satisfy a party of opponents irritated at being chased from office by what they deemed an unprincipled combination, affords small matter for marvel. It was almost impossible that the warfare should end thus; nor did it so end. On the 3d of May, Mr George Dawson again returned to the assault. This he contrived to do by rising, and asking the Prime Minister, as soon as he entered the House, "Whether any arrangement had been made for filling up the places of Master of the Mint, Judge-Advocate, and Surveyor-General of Woods and Forests?" To this Mr Canning merely replied, seeing what was intended, by a loud "Yes;"—an answer which was followed by a burst of "cheers and laughter." Mr Dawson then said that he did not quite understand what all the cheering meant. However, to bring the matter to a crisis, and to afford himself and others the opportunity of making some further remarks on the existing state of parties, he should move a humble address to his Majesty, praying "that copies of the commissions of the Master of the Mint and Judge-Advocate be laid before the House." Mr Dawson then went on to attack the conduct of the Whigs, who were now supporting Mr Canning, with whom he said they agreed on no one

point, save that of the Catholic claims; and he concluded by asking what was to be done with such questions as Parliamentary Reform—the Pension List—the Church of Ireland, &c., &c.

Mr Brougham, who amidst the laughter of the House seconded the motion, re-stated his grounds for the conduct of the supporters of the new government with some additions. He stigmatized the resignations which had taken place as a device not only to place Mr Canning but the King in an awkward position, and really to wrest from the latter the exercise of his prerogative! He also gave as a ground of support the Foreign Policy of Mr Canning, a line of policy which he said he had advocated since 1817. After some explanations from the Prime Minister, with respect to the exact times when the resignations reached him, Mr Peel again addressed the House, both in defence of his own conduct and in vituperation of that of his opponents,—

"I must say (commenced Mr Peel) that I am very far from being satisfied with the explanation of the honourable and learned gentleman as to the principles upon which the present coalition has been formed; and yet a proper explanation of those principles involves questions of the gravest importance; for upon the explanation given must depend the degree of confidence which can be placed in the present administration * * * * * * *. It is, Sir, a very grave question whether these gentlemen have not abandoned their principles in the short space of a week, and the subject ought to be treated in another temper than that of sarcasm. I need not say that I feel no sort of personal animosity towards the honourable and learned gentleman. I

never did entertain such feelings, nor do I now. But I am sorry to say that our political differences are as wide as ever, if not wider: for he certainly has not yet been able to give me a full, satisfactory, and clear explanation of the principles upon which he has helped to form and to join this coalition; and yet a full, clear, and satisfactory account of these matters is (as every one must see) absolutely necessary before anybody can venture to repose any confidence in an administration constituted as the present is. What, for instance, is to be done with the question of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM? Is it to be brought forward in any specific form and supported by the new friends of the government; or is it to be postponed until all those shades of opinion about it, of which I have heard this evening for the very first time, can be blended in one harmonious scheme? That question certainly was, or used to be, with those honourable gentlemen a common bond of connexion; I do not say uniting every man in its support, but undoubtedly including so many of them, that from it a great parliamentary party took their colour and derived their name. I should have thought that no government that hoped for the support of parliament would have countenanced so essential a change in the constitution of this House as the party to which I allude demands. If these opinions be not to be countenanced by the new government, on what principles, then, I ask again, is the question of parliamentary reform to be discussed? Is it, too, to be left as the Catholic question is left? I do not say this reproachfully, because I know that I myself concurred in the arrangement as to that question (hear, hear, hear); but I ask, Will it be suffered to remain still? These questions, it seems to me, must produce elements of discord in the new administration, unless indeed Parliamentary Reform is also to be made an open question; though truly the honourable and learned gentleman, in what he said on that point, has not been very explicit in his statement. These, however, are points of the utmost importance. I have listened attentively to the speech

of the honourable and learned gentleman; but the satisfaction which I derive from his statements is so far from being complete, that it has absolutely increased my anxiety to hear more of the conditions on which he has covenanted to support this government. Sir, I hear it stated, as one of the grounds of this union, that his Majesty was abandoned by his former servants, and that his very prerogative was so put in jeopardy by this secession, that my right honourable friend (Mr Canning) had no alternative left but to apply to his political enemies for their support. Now, if for the sake of argument I admit that to be strictly true, if I admit that on this ground this coalition was really formed,—that its chief—nay that its sole object was, merging every subordinate point, to maintain the prerogative of the Crown,—why, then, I ask, if that be the ground, is it not at once declared to be so? Why do they not avow that to be the real reason? Why do they not candidly say that they will forget the Catholic question,—that they will forget Parliamentary Reform,—that they find the Crown in danger, and that they have rushed forward to defend it? Why do they allow the first places in the state to remain unfilled, like empty boxes waiting for those who have engaged them? Why, I ask—again and again—do they not come down to this House and frankly tell us what are indeed the principles on which they have entered upon this coalition? Their conduct, sir, I repeat, is not satisfactory! It is not suited to the fair dealing nor to the manliness in which this country delights. Nor does it accord with the principles of the constitution for one party experimentally to unite with another, on condition of a period of probation—in order to determine, by trying, whether their principles of action will agree or not! If it be a union of parties, why is it not so publicly proclaimed? Why is not the emergency declared that has rendered such a step requisite? * * * * * * I am anxious, Sir, to see the character of party-men, and of the *great* parties in this country, upheld. I should not be glad certainly to see the

Whigs in office. They ought, I think, to be excluded from power; but I should be sorry to see their character as a great party lowered or disgraced. But it must be tarnished unless the principles are made known upon which this union has been effected; and unless a satisfactory explanation of the delay in giving the reasons for that union be made, I apprehend that the character of the party may not, for the future, stand very high with the public. Sir, I ask again why is all this delay? Is it that there are in the notice-book some inconvenient entries, which the members of that party know not well how to evade, or how to erase? What, for instance, will they do with the notice of the member for Bandon (Lord John Russell) for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts? This is another important question, and one which I suspect will display the material difference that exists betwixt the opinions of those right honourable gentlemen whom I have so lately had the honour to have for colleagues and their new allies! If after the noble Lord, however, has consulted with the leaders of Protestant dissent, he should be prepared to move any further concessions in their favour, I for my part give him notice that I intend to oppose him, and this I shall do whether in or out of power (hear, hear!) To me that, indeed, is a circumstance of very little weight or consideration. The most cursory view of my career will show that, at all events, I have not been actuated by any ardent desire to hold office. Whenever I have accepted it, it has been a personal sacrifice to me. As far as I am concerned personally, I may say I care not whether I return or no. I feel grateful, sir, for the confidence of the Crown; but I am —thank God—independent of it. My principles are not chargeable with my position * * * *

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This, sir, is not an occasion on which I can reasonably be expected to give expression more fully to my opinions. As, however, my votes on many questions that must come before me must depend upon the degree of confidence I possess in this ad-

ministration, I feel entitled to call upon them to state the conditions on which it is formed, and particularly with regard to the question of "Reform in Parliament," and with regard to the Established Church. I see that the honourable member for Montrose (Mr Hume) yesterday postponed his motion respecting the Church of Ireland, avowing as his reason for so doing, that he had "full confidence" in the intentions of the new administration; though I believe from the bottom of my heart that he will find himself mistaken in his expectation of support from my right honourable friend (Mr Canning) who I believe will manfully defend that church against all his attacks. But when I hear the honourable member for Montrose in public give such a reason as this for postponing his motion, I am compelled to pause before I give my vote of confidence to the present administration. I must pause until I know the principles upon which it is based as to Parliamentary Reform, and as to other questions of vast importance—until I know whether they are to be open, like the Catholic question, for discussion by every member of this ministry, or whether those who are called by the name of Whigs are prepared now to oppose them whenever they may be brought forward, (loud cheering)."—*Hansard*, vol. xvii. p. 525.

To Mr Peel succeeded Sir Francis Burdett, who, in an address certainly of great oratorical powers, repelled the insinuation of venal motives.

"He asserted that personally he neither did expect nor did he want the slightest favour of this government; but, he repeated, the same reasoning that justified Mr Peel in withholding support, also justified him in giving it. He argued that, although neither the great question of Reform nor of Catholic Emancipation might be directly advanced, this change of ministry was a great good to the country; and he (Sir Francis) was willing to accept it, although it might not be all he wished.

He would abstain, he said, after the assertion of the right hon. gentleman (Mr Peel) to impute those resignations by which the nation was so much obliged to a conspiracy, though that unquestionably would have been his opinion had he not been so assured. No man, he repeated, who judged merely by *the facts*, could come to any conclusion other than it was an attempt to intimidate the King and force him to recall the '*squad*' who had done the country the favour to resign their offices. After the assertion of the right hon. gentleman, he was bound to believe there was no actual concert; but still he thought there must have been 'a sympathetic concert,' arising from an identity of character in the parties (loud cries of 'no, no!' and laughter). The right hon. gentleman had talked of 'coincidences;' but if there was no concert here, surely this was the most astonishing series of coincidences (all accidental) that the world had seen! The practical result was to intimidate his Majesty in the exercise of his prerogative, whether intended or not (hear, hear), and he would support the present ministry, if it were for no other reason than to rescue the crown from such a position as that. After taunting Mr Peel with his change of tone, and the contrast of his speech, just concluded, with the studied courtesy and moderation of his former exposition, Sir Francis concluded by saying that the whole was a providential occurrence for the nation. That they had got rid of the dross and preserved the precious metal; and that, if a part of the old ministry had been 'knocked out,' the 'brains' at all events were safe!"

After some observations from Sir Edward Knatchbull in praise of Mr Peel's conduct, Mr Canning at last rose. He commenced by denouncing the irregularity of the conduct of Mr George Dawson, who, under pretence of a question, had intruded a motion, and had complained of his (Mr Canning's) absence, although

he had not thought proper to afford him the usual courtesy of a previous notice of his intention to put such a question. The right hon. gentleman then continued in these words:—

"I rejoice, sir, however, that the standard of opposition is at length raised in this House. Such an act is, to me, worth a thousand professions of qualified neutrality. In whatever mind the feeling of hostility lurks, let it come boldly forth, and boldly will I meet it (loud cheering). As there have been one or two questions asked me, I trust the House will extend its indulgence to me whilst I briefly answer them. I am asked what I mean to do on the subject of Parliamentary Reform? Why, I say to oppose it to the end of my life in this House, under whatever shape it may appear (cheers). I am asked what I intend to do as to the Test Act? I say to oppose it (cheers). It has so happened that the Test Act is one of the subjects upon which it has never yet been my lot to pronounce an opinion in this House, yet I have an opinion upon it, and I do not hesitate to declare it. I think that the exertions of the legislature ought to be directed to the relief of practical and not of theoretical grievances; and that inasmuch as any meddling with the Test Act might go to prejudice that great question, the success of which I have most truly at heart, therefore I will oppose it (cheers). I hope I have spoken out. I hope I have made myself clearly understood (cheers). As to the charge brought against me by the hon. baronet who last spoke (Sir E. Knatchbull), that the government, when called upon to give an answer upon the subject of its composition and policy, left the answer to those who had no apparent interest in or connexion with the question, I deny the charge (hear). I say without hesitation that the accusation is untrue. The whole of the speech was addressed, not to the government, but to those members who supported the government, and they have assigned their rea-

sons for doing so through the mouths of the honourable members for Winchilsea and for Westminster. I never shall shrink from explanation or defence either before the hostility of the open and manly foe, or the not less dangerous insinuations of the disavowed opponent (loud cheering)."

After a speech from Lord John Russell, who, to the surprise of many, avowed his belief that the country was "indifferent" to any reform in parliament, and a short, rambling address from Sir George Warrender, the motion was negatived, of course without a division.

It is sufficiently evident to any one who is at pains to peruse this debate, that the speakers on both sides studiously kept back, though they could not altogether conceal, the real motives of all that had been done. It seems very clear that had Lord Eldon, Mr Peel, and the Duke of Wellington, suffered Mr Canning to succeed Lord Liverpool as head of the government, and acted with him, he, outnumbered as he was, must, as premier, have been infinitely more embarrassed and more painfully placed, relatively to the Catholics, than any of his subordinates could have been. But against this arrangement Mr Peel's pride recalcitrated; whilst Mr Canning, resolved to be prime minister either with or without him, studiously framed excuses for declining to serve under the Duke of Wellington, who he knew would not attempt to form a government with him in opposition. That there might be no actual conspiracy amongst the ministers who resigned, might be true; but they must have generally known each other's intentions; and it is impossible to believe that they did not hope to be recalled by the King, whose confidence

or countenance they were persuaded could never be extended to Mr Canning. On the other hand, who can review the conduct of Sir Francis Burdett, Mr Brougham, Lord John Russell, Mr Tierney, and the other Whigs who eagerly supported Mr Canning, without perceiving that their real aim was to cause an incurable schism in the once united Tory party, in which they succeeded. They all well knew that the Premier only obtained the reins of government by convincing George IV. that the Catholic cause would not be advanced by him one single step, and at the same time giving him the triumph of showing his former ministers that he could govern without them, and this without yielding a single measure to conciliate the Whig party. With regard to reform in parliament, the repeal of the Test Act, and reforms in the church, they all knew Mr Canning was as hostile as was ever Lord Eldon or the Duke of Wellington. But the chance of breaking up Tory union was irresistible; and this, whether he intended it or not, the reckless ambition of Mr Canning helped them to do.

From that hour a distinct line of demarcation between Mr Canning and his followers, and Lord Eldon, the Duke of Wellington, Mr Peel, and the high Tories, was established, which only disappeared to be renewed soon after by Mr Peel himself, upon whom the change of opinion, now evidenced everywhere, no doubt made a lasting impression. Out of doors, and with the press generally, the new government became immediately popular to an extraordinary degree. The new Premier, by the very questionable change in the con-

duct of foreign policy which he began to effect just prior to Lord Liverpool's illness and prostration, had gained him the hearts of all shades of Liberals who are impressed rather by the sound of words and phrases than by the tendency and nature of acts and deeds. With such he was, after a fashion, a favourite already; and all now hoped that, being deserted by his former friends and sustained by his former opponents, he must, maugre the remonstrances of the former, yield something to the latter. Hence, though few reflecting men really believed in the stability of Mr Canning's cabinet, many without believing wished it, and did their best to give it weight and firmness. The public mind was in fact becoming ripe for change, and it eagerly caught at the first which circumstances had unexpectedly rendered practicable.

Although, however, the current of general opinion set in this direction at this period, there were yet many exceptions; and amongst these was one of the most steady and consistent members of the Whig party, the now venerable Earl Grey, a man who had grown old in opposition. Earl Grey had been in early life an active, and strenuous, and bold advocate of a reform of the House of Commons; and under his auspices, in the memorable year 1793, was drawn up that well-known petition of "The Society of the Friends of the People," in which it was offered to be proved at the bar of the House of Commons that a majority of the members of that House were returned by one hundred and fifty-two peers and rich commoners. To his reforming principles Earl Grey had all along adhered.

They were moderate and cautious. He had never countenanced the extremes of those who rejoiced in the distinctive title of "Radical Reformers." In his measures of reform the peculiar views and interests of his party and of his order were not left unconsidered; and hence he had never, like Mr Brougham,—when a seat for Westminster was the prize,—pledged himself in words and in writing to universal suffrage and the method of voting by ballot, nor ever declared that the duration of parliaments ought to be less than the term fixed after the Revolution of 1688,—that is to say, triennial. Between him and the new Premier there was no sympathy. The character of the Earl was grave, dignified, and somewhat stern; whilst that of the ambitious Commoner was witty, sarcastic, volatile, and fugacious.

Earl Grey, probably without being able to help it, resented the stinging and remorseless satire with which Canning delighted to lash all reformers and revolutionists, whom he unceremoniously classed together. To Earl Grey, therefore, who really attached a value and a meaning to party professions, the sudden adhesion to Mr Canning of Messrs Brougham, Tierney, Russell, and other members of the old Whig party, was decidedly distasteful. Having no faith in the stability of such a coalition, the movement was adverse to his maxims of policy as well as feelings of good taste. Both were shocked by it; and his strong sense of disapprobation he was not very slow to express on the first opportunity that offered itself. On the 10th of May the occasion came. It arose out of a debate ostensibly about the new arrangements as to the duties

on grain, but really about the merits and demerits of the new administration. As the greater part of the Peers were secretly or openly, for one reason or another, good or bad, irritated by the success of Mr Canning, it may easily be conceived that such a speech, coming from such a man as Earl Grey, produced a prodigious sensation at the moment. It was rapturously hailed by the high Tory party as a splendid but rare specimen of Whig honesty in politics; and by the more pliable portion of Earl Grey's own party it was heard with deep vexation, implying as it did a severe though tacit censure on themselves. The substance of this pungent address was as follows:—

"The Earl commenced by expressing in the strongest and most carefully studied terms his full confidence in the upright motives actuating Lord Lansdowne, Mr Brougham, Mr Tierney, Lord John Russell, and such others of the old Whig party as now supported Mr Canning's administration. He regretted that in this conduct on their part, however, he was precluded from taking any share. Whilst he said this, he begged to guard the House from inferring that he sat upon the opposition benches as an active opponent of the existing government. That he was not; but the government being now in the hands of one in whom he could not place a full and sufficient confidence, how could he, he asked, consistently become its supporter? Earl Grey went on then to say that he had heard a great deal about the prerogative of the crown to select its own ministers. He was never one to dispute this right of the crown. But many seemed to forget that, at the same time the crown exercised this right, the people had also their prerogative, and that was to express in any legal way their approbation or disapprobation of the royal choice (hear, hear). That was one

of the rights of every Englishman. For these reasons (continued the noble Earl) I think that those who have declined to enter into the service of an administration of which they disapprove, have been perfectly justified in their conduct. And this I take to be a rule so clear and so sacred, that I think they have only been wrong in entering into any explanation respecting it (loud cheering). I am glad to find from these marks of approbation that what I have stated is assented to. Then, as to what are the objections entertained by persons who might fill the vacant offices of the government, but who have declined so to do. There may, my lords, be many objections. I have heard much on this subject which I confess I do not precisely understand (hear, hear, hear). I have heard certainly of objections arising from personal,—meaning thereby not justifiable feelings. But I am far from thinking that meaning ought in all cases to be affixed to the word. When I am called to enter into the service of an administration, I am called upon deeply to commit my character and my honour to the measures of that government of which I am to form a part; and if, my lords, I see that the person who influences and directs the administration is one to whom I cannot safely commit myself, I am bound to decline engaging in such service, as I do not feel that full security for my honour and character which a full confidence in the head of the administration can alone give me (hear). In that sense of the word, a personal objection may be the very best and soundest that can be entertained; and to claim a right of *questioning* any one upon such objections is, in my idea, a most improper, and, I will add, most unconstitutional dogma, (loud cheers)."

After again denying that he was actuated by any motive or feeling that could be called "factious," Lord Grey asked the House *why* he should support a cabinet from which he could not expect the advancement of

a single question deemed by him of national importance? Adverting to the Catholic question, which he deemed of the most pressing importance, he thus continued:—

"I do not see in that ministry—I do not see in the persons who compose it—I do not see in the principles on which it is held to be formed, anything to justify me in supposing that this question will advance one step in consequence of the change to which they owe their places (hear, hear, hear). Is it not true, I will ask, that they have entered into an engagement with his Majesty? (let not the House be alarmed by the idea that I am about to enter on forbidden ground, or to touch upon a topic excluded by the rules of parliament); but have they not entered into an engagement with his Majesty as to certain and distinct principles on which the administration has been composed? At first we heard that it was to be formed upon a principle similar to that of which Lord Liverpool was the head. My noble friend who spoke last (Earl Spencer) has stated his ignorance of what that principle means. But it is not so with me (hear, hear). I did, and I do understand its meaning, and it is this,—the exclusion of the Catholic question as a measure of government (hear, hear, hear). To that principle I always have been, and I always shall be, steadfastly opposed. And I now ask the noble lords opposite to answer me, ay or no, is this question, or is *not* this question, to be proposed to parliament by them? We are told, it is true, that any individual of the government may (if he pleases) propose it! But that is a privilege, or rather a right, which was never denied to any member of Lord Liverpool's administration, nor of any administration that ever existed. I ask, then, of the noble lords opposite, or of any one of them, to answer me, ay or no, has or has not an engagement been entered into *not* to bring forward the Catholic question as a measure of government? If such an engagement has been made, that at once settles my mind, because it is a

principle I have always opposed. It is nothing less than that which in 1809 I rejected (hear, hear), and to which nothing shall ever induce me to agree."

Lord Grey then went on to observe that the sort of contrast which was attempted to be made between the new Premier and his late colleagues was absurd,—that the few measures, tinged with liberality, which they had passed, must be attributed to the whole Liverpool cabinet, who were never controlled by Mr Canning. He also denied that any credit was due to Mr Canning as Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and that the praises heaped upon him by interested people had, in fact, no foundation in truth.

"First (said Earl Grey) let me take his conduct as to South America. I was one of those who recommended and approved of the recognition of the independence of these countries. If any blame existed, it was because this had been too long delayed. But if the policy of that measure was to be learned from a speech published by the right honourable gentleman,—if we are to judge, from his statement of them, of the reasons which dictated it—then do I say that the right honourable gentleman's speech is deserving of the severest reprehension. * * * I deny the soundness of the right honourable gentleman's policy, because I do not see the danger to this country was less though these colonies were separated. Nor is it true that it was the union of the Indies which made us jealous of the influence of France over Spain. Our jealousy was not founded on European principles, but on the military position of Spain, and the consequent peril to Ireland, which must always follow if Spain should come to be in the occupation of France. The danger was from Spain alone, not the Indies. The right honourable gentleman takes to himself the whole credit 'of calling the Spanish colonies in America into ex-

istence;' but how stands the fact? Why we find the acknowledgment of that independence did not take place until two years after the late occupation of Spain by the French,—until two years after the perpetration of an act by the French government more oppressive and base than any committed even by Napoleon himself. The occupation of Spain took place in 1823. The Spanish colonies were not acknowledged by this country to be independent until 1825.

* * * * * * *

Earl Grey then proceeded to state, that with respect to the question of a parliamentary reform, which he always advocated, and always should advocate, more lukewarmness existed than he could wish to see; even in his own party, as well as amongst the people generally. He said he hardly knew if his noble friend (Lord Lansdowne) was or was not reformer. He had not heard him advocate a parliamentary reform in his place in that House. If therefore he was at all a reformer, he was, in his judgment, probably the most moderate of the moderate. Under such an apparent want of zeal for a better representation, he could not expect either his noble friend or any one else to avoid joining or aiding an administration on that account. That question was, however, gaining ground. To advocate it once exposed himself and those who thought with him to obloquy. But though to support a change of that sort was at one time held to be almost traitorous, he had the consolation to see men, who were once most opposed, adopting those opinions. Earl Grey then concluded a powerful address in the following emphatic words, some of which, when the scenes which shortly fol-

lowed are recalled to mind, are well calculated to excite a smile either at the lack of sincerity or foresight which statesmen sometimes exhibit.

"I cannot, putting Parliamentary Reform aside, conceal from myself, at the same time, that within the last few years many laws have been passed hostile to civil liberty; and to each and every one of these the right honourable gentleman has given his efficient support; and unless the right honourable gentleman can retrace his steps,—unless he can erase some of them which still blot the statute-book, I can have no confidence in him as a friend of civil liberty. There is nothing more easy than to bring the opinions of the right honourable gentleman on this subject to the test. There is now existing on the statute-book one of those invasions of civil liberty to which I have alluded. It is that which makes the second conviction for a political libel subject to a sentence of transportation (banishment):—the most flagrant violation of the liberty of the press which has been attempted in modern times. Now, this is a matter capable of instant proof. Let my noble friend (the Marquis of Lansdowne) only bring forward a motion for the repeal of that act, and he shall find in me a ready and zealous supporter; but I fear he will, at the same time, find in the right honourable gentleman an able and zealous opponent. * * * The sentiments I now utter are my own. * * * * * * I now feel myself almost a solitary individual. Nothing can be further from my intention than a union with the party now opposing government; for from that party, on most questions, I differ as widely as the poles are asunder. Nor can I join those who support an administration in the construction of which, as a ministry, I cannot have any confidence (hear, hear, hear). * * * * Those who have done me the honour to attach any importance to my opinions, are aware that I have, for some years, been withdrawing myself, more and more, from any direct interference in the politics of the country. As long, however, as I

do remain, I am anxious to keep that position in which I can do what I consider most good. To take a more active part is quite out of my intention. '*Non eadem ætas, non mens.*'"—*Hansard, New Series,* vol. xvii. p. 730.

The cheers with which this honest and manly speech was received were not needed to demonstrate the delight which it gave to all who disliked the new Premier, or who grudged him or envied him his success. To those who, like Mr Peel, had resigned office, it was especially welcome, whilst amidst the supporters of the administration, of all shades of politics, it created irritation extreme. In fact, this speech may be almost said to have sealed the fate of the new administration. Exposing, as it completely did, the hollowness of the ostensible grounds on which the coalition rested, it rendered it impossible for the parties to act together for any length of time without a loss of character fatal to politicians who have any character to lose.

Amongst Earl Grey's own party, the angry feeling was not less than amongst Mr Canning's pliable Tory friends. To them it was "the unkindest cut of all," and they felt it to be so. By friends and foes the speech was attributed to the extreme soreness arising from some of Canning's bitter satires on reformers, the venom of which still rankled in the breast of the venerable Earl; and a retaliatory article, attributed (wrongfully or rightfully) to Mr Brougham, soon diversified the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*, in which Lord Grey was ridiculed for giving up substantial benefits for the sake of a visionary and impossible scheme, of which the very people, whom it was meant to cajole, were

now tired! Upon Mr Canning himself the effect of Lord Grey's cutting exposition is said to have been very severe. From that moment he felt, and he perceived that most men felt, that the hasty fabric, which a selfish ambition on one hand and a crooked policy on the other had erected, could not stand, ill assorted and feebly cemented as its materials were. Whatever men might wish, none had confidence in it; nor can it be doubted that had Providence for a longer period even spared the artist who constructed the brittle pile, it must have fallen amidst the difficulties in store for it. Fate, however, ordered otherwise, and the premiership of Mr Canning was doomed to be as brief in duration as it was hasty in construction.

The remainder of the session of parliament for 1827 was passed in discussions of little permanent importance. One of the points of most real interest, after Mr Canning's accession to power, was the report of a select committee, appointed at the instance of Mr Peel, to inquire into the causes of the rapid increase of crime which the last twenty years had exhibited. This also is one of the symptoms of that almost imperceptible progress of opinion in the direction of social improvement and reform which may now be faintly traced in its effects. It has been observed that Mr Peel, towards the conclusion of his exposition after resigning place, did not omit to take credit to himself as a reformer. This he had a right to do, although it may be, perhaps, a matter of question whether his exertions in this direction were either based upon solid reasoning, or really philosophical in their application.

Mr Peel had, in fact, recently entered upon a reforming department which originated with Sir Samuel Romilly, and by his death was left unoccupied. This department was a change in the criminal code, which, in these modern times, seems to be becoming an apparent necessity. No one did or could deny the facts embodied in the report of this committee laid before parliament in 1827. It became palpable that from and after the time when the burdens entailed by the French war began to be excessive—that is, from and after the year 1806—the criminal commitments had been alarmingly augmented, and the convictions so numerous, even for capital crimes, that public feeling was outraged by the number of executions which must, under the old law, have taken place. The prisons also were everywhere becoming too small for their numerous inmates, at which no one can wonder who only glances at the returns as given in this and subsequent Reports.* That this state of things created a present necessity for diminishing the number of executions may be

* 1827. Extracted from Appendix to Commons' Report.

Years.	Commitments.	Years.	Commitments.
1806, ...	4346	1823, ...	12,263
1810, ...	5146	1824, ...	13,698
1811, ...	5337	1825, ...	14,437
1812, ...	6576	1826, ...	16,147
1813, ...	7164	1827, ...	17,924
1814, ...	6390		
1815, ...	7816	Report, 1836.	
1816, ...	9091	1828, ...	16,564
1817, ...	13,932	1829, ...	18,675
1818, ...	13,567	1830, ...	18,107
1819, ...	14,254	1831, ...	19,647
1820, ...	13,710	1832, ...	20,629
1821, ...	13,115	1833, ...	20,072
1822, ...	12,241	1834, ...	

admitted; but it may be doubted whether, as argued by many, this softening of the criminal code has even the slightest tendency to diminish crime. To those who with the statistics of crime will compare the general statistics of a country, it gradually becomes apparent that ease of living and morality, as far as regards criminal or felonious offences, march together.

The ancient criminal code of England, barbarous as it seems to modern refinements, was made when the temptation to the higher class of offences was really nothing; when an ordinary artisan could easily obtain wages so liberal that a week's labour would obtain for him a half or more of the carcass of an ox, or two or three sheep; and when, consequently, the desperation and recklessness engendered by want had no existence. To make a man then a felon, downright vice and profligacy must accompany the crime; and upon this principle it was that our ancestors punished stealing, burglary, and highway robbery, so severely; it being at the same time a maxim of law that "stealing victuals," if actual want existed, was no felony. It must also be recollected that the change in the value of money since the accession of the Tudors has made the ancient criminal law much more severe than its framers intended it to be. "Stealing above the value of ten-

From the Report of 1853.

Years.	Commitments.
1843, ...	29,591
1844, ...	26,542
1845, ...	24,803
1846, ...	25,107
1847, ...	28,833
1848, ...	30,349
1849, ...	27,816
1850, ...	26,813
1851, ...	27,960
1852, ...	27,510

pence" was, at the time of the enactment, which severely punished it, really stealing above the value of sixteen shillings, or more than that. Hence it may be safely affirmed that "petty larceny," in the modern sense, was not severely punished under our earlier kings, though all such robberies as argued real depravity in the thief certainly were so.

To argue, as many now do, that capital punishments only harden those who behold them, seems to strike at the existence of any sort of infliction as an example. That, in the metropolis, an execution, performed in the presence of probably ten thousand utterly depraved beings of both sexes, whose aim it is to throw discredit upon all punishment, may produce little apparent preventive effect, is quite true; for where criminality has at length become *epidemic*, punishments no doubt lose much of their effect. It seems, however, almost impossible to believe that the capital punishment of heinous crime, amidst a community generally moral, can fail of its preventive effect. That Romilly and Peel only yielded to the necessity of the case, and therefore rightly yielded, it is easy to admit; but if the evidence of facts is to be taken, it certainly seems to follow that the alterations in criminal law must have been in many ways delusive, such is the increase of felonious acts up to this moment, and so many deviations from the best maxims of English jurisprudence have accompanied this departure from the usages of the old common law. Romilly and Peel had both too great a share of common sense to countenance the absurdities of secret executions, which, strange to say, have

been advocated by men styling themselves, and styled by the world, "philosophers." But, after all, it may be doubted if their efforts took the true direction; and whether that direction is not indicated in the profound philosophy of that form of petition which teaches us first of all to pray that our "daily bread" be not denied us, and that by the absence of "temptation" we may be "delivered from evil;" for certain it is that neither moral teaching nor retributive punishment have ever shown themselves equal to pacify that war against society which must always spring up when the burdens imposed are felt to be more than commensurate with the benefits conferred.

After the voting of the supplies, which was accomplished early in June, in, despite of a failing revenue and upon a promise from the Premier that a committee of Financial Inquiry should be appointed during the next session of parliament, little but mere routine business was done. The session was closed on the 2d of July; and with it may be said to have closed the political existence of Mr Canning, the failure of whose health and spirits had now become lamentably apparent. It had been predicted by Lord Eldon, in a letter to his daughter, lady Bankes, that Mr Canning's strength would be found unequal to the struggle with the mental labour and harassing anxiety which he would have to sustain. This anticipation was soon fatally realized. The Premier had, on the close of the session, retired to Chiswick, to a villa belonging to the Duke of Devonshire, for change of air and quietude. A low, nervous fever, which could not be

resisted by art, was now, however, rapidly undermining such strength as remained to him. Towards August, an internal inflammation commenced, which rapidly increased until the 8th of that month, on which day Mr Canning expired, one of the many victims of personal ambition and the love of power for its own sake: a passion so captivating to all but first-rate natures.

Mr Canning's character is easily summed up. His abilities were specious but not solid; brilliant but not profound. He possessed great wit, a happy talent for ridicule, and a complete readiness and fluency of elocution,—qualities which make a powerful partisan, but nothing beyond that. Possessing, as he did, precisely those talents which recommend a man to the favour of a miscellaneous assembly, he availed himself of them to the utmost, and obtained an ascendency over the House of Commons which few men have ever equalled. To an assembly, so got together, and condemned to discuss the gravest questions, most of which it imperfectly understands, the man who can enliven a dull discussion, or throw an unexpected light over a perplexed and heavy debate, is sure to be welcome. This Mr Canning knew; and well did he profit from the knowledge. The lightness, grace, and brilliance of his elocution, were, when the occasion suited, so happy and overpowering, that at times it was evident to those who witnessed them that his friends hardly enjoyed them more than his enemies, who could not help being amused, at the same time that they were baffled and

annoyed. In this point of view he far exceeded his great rival Peel; although towards the close of his singular career the latter obtained a power over the House of Commons not far behind that of Canning himself. It was acquired however by different means. It was built upon that studied courtesy, that command of temper, that plausibility, that quiet good nature of allusion, and lastly upon that intuitive knowledge of the characters and vulnerable points of those with whom he had to deal, in which Mr Peel was probably never excelled by any statesman.

Mr Canning's whole mind, however, partook of the selfish and the superficial. When it suited him to talk of the English constitution, he did so with a gravity assumed for the occasion; but his only notion of safe government was that all real power should be vested in a few powerful hands, upon whom it should be incumbent to employ men of talent as their ministers. As his language was carefully studied with a view to his own ends and little else, he judged of others by himself; and hence, probably, the bitter sacasms with which he baited all those who advocated extensive or organic reforms were as sincere as they were stinging. And from this sincerity they in all likelihood derived much of their power and effect, which were undoubted; for no man was ever subjected to the ridicule of Canning who did not more or less wince under it. That he utterly disbelieved in the possibility of popular government, even in a mitigated sense, was palpable enough; and thus patriotism was by him, when it took this shape, merely set down as a jargon, adopted

by a set of adventurers in politics, to whom all other means of furthering their ends were denied. Acting, as he did, a subordinate part through nearly his whole life, and intent only on advancing himself by means of political intrigues, it is to be believed that his knowledge of many of the difficulties which beset him as soon as he grasped power was small, and his embarrassment, in the same ratio, great. This is the more likely because his congenial pursuits were opposed to such knowledge; and because even in his favourite departments, his acquisitions were not profound nor very various. He was fond of parading his classical acquirements: but the authors he quoted were those ordinarily used at school and college; and a passage from Virgil, introduced and set off with the grace which he knew how to give it, electrified an audience who relished the appliance without detecting the triteness of the quotation.

That the real character of Mr Canning was known to those in whom political power at that time resided, is clear. They regarded him as an accomplished adventurer, more to be used than trusted. The brilliance of his talents, joined to the pliancy of his principles of action, enabled him, at last, to foil his patrons, and to emerge for a moment from the subordinate position to which they wished to limit an ambition not to be so controlled. Their appreciation of his capabilities was, however, better perhaps than his own; for no reflecting person has ever believed that, had he survived, his power could have been long protracted.

As a politician he is in two points remarkable, and

in two only. In order to obtain a precarious sway, he unquestionably caused the first breach in that great united, and once-powerful party which he ornamented, but certainly did not benefit. This is no enviable distinction; and it is just as little enviable to be recorded, as Mr Canning ultimately will be in all probability, as the originator of a system of foreign policy, which, though popular with the million, and since adopted and continued by the liberal party, will hardly in the end be found conducive to either the safety or honour of the country that is persuaded, or driven, systematically to practise it.

It has been already seen that Mr Canning deeply and strongly felt the insult offered to England and the injury done to British influence by the French interference in Spain, in 1823. In retaliation he, first covertly and next openly, encouraged the insurgent Spanish American colonies to assert their independence. When, however, the now despotic government of Ferdinand VII., in revenge for this, attempted to destroy British influence over Portugal, as had been done in Spain, the irritation and alarm of Mr Canning became very great. He was bound by treaty to defend Portugal if attacked by a foreign force; and should France, encouraged by the easy triumph of the Duc d'Angoulême, back this aggression on Portugal, collision became very imminent. Mr Canning therefore seems to have concluded that the tendencies of the Holy Alliance (as the union of despotic powers was called) were to be checked by any means, were that means even a union with revolutionists; and on this he acted.

During a debate on an address called forth by a royal message respecting the threatened aggression on Portugal, which was divided into parties of constitutionalists and absolutists as Spain was, Mr Canning expressed himself thus :—

"If into such a war this country shall be compelled to enter, we shall enter into it with a sincere desire to mitigate rather than exasperate,—and to mingle only in the conflict of arms, not in the *more fatal conflict of opinions.* But I much fear that this country (however earnestly desiring to avoid it) could not, in such case, avoid seeing ranked under her banners, *all the restless and all the dissatisfied* of any nation with which she might come in conflict (hear, hear, hear)! It is the contemplation of this *new power in any future war* which excites my most anxious apprehension! It is one thing to have a "giant's strength," but it would be another to use it "like a giant." The consciousness of such strength is undoubtedly a source of confidence and security; but in the situation in which this country stands, our business is not to seek opportunities of displaying it, but to content ourselves with letting the professors of violent and exaggerated doctrines *on both sides* feel that it is not their interest to convert an UMPIRE into an ADVERSARY. The situation of England amidst the struggle of political opinions which agitates, more or less sensibly, different countries of the world, may be compared to that of the Ruler of the Winds, as described by the poet,—

"—— celsâ sedet Æolus arcê,
Sceptra tenens; mollitque animos et temperat iras;
Ni faciat, maria ac terras, cœlumque profundum,
Quippe ferunt rapidi secum, verrantque per auras!"

The consequence of letting out the passions, at present chained and confined, would be to produce a scene of desolation which

no man can contemplate without horror. This then is the reason,—*a reason very different from fear;—the reverse of a consciousness of disability,*—why I dread the recurrence of hostilities in any part of Europe: why I would bear much and would forbear long;—why I would almost put up with anything that did not touch national faith and national honour, *rather than let slip the furies of war the leash of which we hold in our hands;* not knowing whom they may reach, nor how far their ravages may be carried. *Such* is the love of peace which the British government acknowledges, and such the necessity for peace which the circumstances of the world inculcate. I will push these topics no further."—*Hansard's Debates, New Series,* vol. xvi. p. 368.

That such a passage, as this, from the lips of an English Secretary for Foreign Affairs, should be hailed with delight by the discontented in all countries, was only a matter of course. That it should be listened to with tacit disapproval by the high Tory party, as represented by Eldon and Peel, is not at all surprising. But that it should be rapturously applauded and warmly adopted by the Whigs, to whom non-intervention with foreign forms of government has long been a favourite topic, is really a matter for some wonder. For what does this passage actually enunciate? Plainly this, that if Great Britain, for any unexplained reason, finds her former legitimate influence in Europe diminished in effect, she will make a tacit league with the dissatisfied and the disaffected in all countries; and by opposing the fear of insurrections to the designs of foreign governments, regain a power over them which she cannot exercise as formerly by more open means. It needs little reflection to see

that, of all kinds of intervention, this is at once the most insidious and the most dangerous. All nations, whatever be their governments, contain seditious, violent, and visionary men, dissatisfied with all that is practicable, and wanting all that is impracticable. All nations, too, contain men who, with reason on their side, desire to ameliorate the systems of rule under which they live, but who are feared and disliked by their rulers, and who in turn hate and condemn these rulers. If, then, governments, for their own ends, and under the cover of amicable relations, are to go on making tacit and clandestine leagues with the discontented subjects of other governments, where is the use of treaties of peace, or what meaning is left to the word "non-intervention?" It is clear that, under such a system, distrust must take the place of confidence; smothered hostility must pass for peace; and international respect and honour turn into a hollow truce, only one remove from actual quarrel. To this most questionable mode of exercising an influence which cannot be called a legitimate one, but of which British statesmen since 1827 have so often availed themselves, may be attributed the marks of jealousy and dislike of British example and British intercourse so frequently exhibited since that time; and to this may be attributed that accusation of perfidiousness in English councils which has been echoed by the press of almost every monarchy in Europe.

After the demise of Mr Canning, the task of forming a modified ministry devolved upon Lord Goderich, which he performed principally by making Mr Herries,

a mere drudge of office, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and by reinstating the Duke of Wellington in the office of Commander-in-chief, which he accepted, it has been asserted, at the request of the King. This ministry, if ministry it could be called, was doomed from the first hour of its brief and ephemeral existence. No man, not excepting even its framer, had the slightest confidence in it; and it was dissolved, during the January of 1828, by the resignation of Lord Goderich, its chief; who, probably, taught by the bitter lesson of 1822–3, looked forward to a coming time of difficulty too onerous to be borne, and too full of responsibility to be waited for.

This "sooterkin" administration was only remarkable for the naval battle of Navarino, one of the most extraordinary results of that extraordinary system of intrigue with which Russia has, for more than a century, vexed and perplexed Europe, the ultimate object of which is the absorption of Turkey in Europe by the Muscovite empire. Russia had, by means of her emissaries, excited the Greeks to revolt against the authority of the Sultan, which was not difficult; but, what is most inconceivable, she had the address to unite both parties in England in favour of the insurgents, though all British commercial interests are opposed to the dismemberment of Turkey. Upon Mr Canning, whose politics were not profound, upon the universities, and upon all who prided themselves on classic lore, she made an impression by appealing to classical recollections. Upon the liberal party she made a similar impression, by representing the Greeks

as enlightened patriots, fighting for a republic against a barbarous despot; and ordinary men were astounded by the spectacle of Oxford Tory doctors subscribing for the Greeks, and ultra-liberals, amongst whom was Lord Byron, volunteering to re-establish the ancient Athenian democracy. To the illiterate but honourable Turk all this was unintelligible. The Greeks had been his subjects from the downfall of the Eastern empire in the 15th century, and he had protected their religion, and imposed upon them a very moderate tribute. To the English he was bound by treaties of alliance, and by commercial relations of increasing value to both nations. To the unlearned, but punctiliously honourable Turk, therefore, the spectacle of English subsidies and British volunteers, to assist those whom he naturally deemed rebels, was a perplexing phenomenon; and just as little could he appreciate either the good feeling or good faith of the junction of Great Britain with his deadly foe Russia, and with France, to force him to acknowledge the independence of his rebellious tributaries. The result was a collision, provoked, it is said, by the allied admirals, which took place about the period of Mr Canning's death, between the fleets of France, Great Britain, and Russia, and the united navies of Turkey and Egypt, by which, after four hours of carnage, the naval power of the Sultan was prostrated, and Greece severed from his empire: and this to further the unprincipled ambition of a power to which the commerce of England is as hateful as the independence of Turkey; and to which, whilst it accuses the Turks of barbarity, it is notorious that the

very meaning of the words honour, good faith, justice, and mercy, is unknown. The successors to the imbecile administration of Lord Goderich had the honesty not to conceal nor deny their just and deep mortification at this at once stupid, bloody, and revolting catastrophe.* The deed, however, was done, and it was in vain to lament an infatuated and cruel injustice, which it was now too late unhappily to repair.

* "The action began at half-past two P. M.; by sunset the destruction was complete. The Armida had taken three frigates, on board which the Turkish wounded and prisoners were placed; but prisoners, *made in peace*, being looked upon as embarrassing, *orders were given to sink the three frigates, which was instantly done.* During the night the Turks destroyed many of their own ships. The rising sun of the 21st shone upon wrecks and corpses, the remains of three line-of-battle ships, three first-rate frigates, eighteen second-rate, the corvettes, and six smaller vessels. The first blossoms of the Cairo schools, the Egyptian youth, were all destroyed. *The victors were embarrassed by no prisoners.*"

Baron Von Prokesch's Memoirs.

CHAPTER X.

Peel and Wellington Administration—Neglect of Lord Eldon—Its Causes—Mr Huskisson in Office—Position of the Ministry—Change in Public Opinion—Power of O'Connell in Ireland—Perilous State of Foreign Affairs—Critical State of France—Designs of Russia on Turkey—Lord John Russell moves the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts—Mr Peel's qualified Opposition—The Repeal carried—Its Effect on the Public Mind—Disfranchisement of Penryn and East Retford—Mr Peel votes to transfer the Penryn Franchise to Manchester—Bill lost in the Lords—Huskisson votes to transfer the Franchise of East Retford to Birmingham—The Duke of Wellington accepts his Resignation—Consequences—Catholic Claims debated—Mr Peel's cautious Language—Mr Peel denies Pitt's being pledged—Mr William Lamb's Declaration—Motion carried—Redoubled Agitation in Ireland—O'Connell elected for Clare—Extraordinary Effects of this—Schemes of Charles X. and De Polignac—Countenanced in England—M. Cottu's Pamphlet—Russia attacks Turkey—Blockades the Turkish Ports—Deep Irritation of Wellington—Resolution to conciliate the Irish—Mr Dawson's Speech—Lord Anglesea's Letter and Dismissal.

LORD GODERICH, who left his post on the colourable plea of "ill health," but really alarmed by the difficulties looming in the political horizon both abroad and at home, resigned in time to let the King form a new ministry, and to allow that ministry to meet parliament at the usual period for commencing the

business of the session. The administration of 1828 was a sort of apparent reconstruction of Lord Liverpool's old ministry, with one striking deviation; but the similitude was to the view only: the spirit which animated this was a very different spirit from that which guided Lord Liverpool and his friends. Lord Liverpool's place of First Lord of the Treasury was filled by the Duke of Wellington, who, despite all his protestations about his unfitness for power and his unwillingness to take it, readily obeyed the request of the King to become its ostensible head.* The guiding spirit of the cabinet was, however, really Mr Peel, the subtlety of whose intellect enabled him, without seeming to do so, to command, not only the Duke of Wellington, but, through the Duke, the entire government. To ordinary observers this was long unknown, but to more sagacious inquirers it was soon evident who led.

The most remarkable part of this arrangement was of a negative order. It consisted of the entire neglect of one who, to use the pointed antithesis of Tacitus, "præfulgebat eo ipsô quòd non videbatur." About

* This memorable administration was thus composed:—First Lord of the Treasury, the Duke of Wellington; Chancellor of Exchequer, Mr Goulburn; Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst; President of the Council, Earl Bathurst; Lord Privy Seal, Lord Ellenborough; Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Dudley and Ward; Secretary for the Colonies, Mr Huskisson; Secretary for Home Department, Mr Peel; Master of the Mint, Mr Herries; President of the Board of Control, Lord Melville; President of the Board of Trade, Mr Grant; Secretary at War, Lord Palmerston. *Not of the Cabinet*—Lord High Admiral, the Duke of Clarence; Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Marquis of Anglesea; Secretary for Ireland, Mr William Lamb.

the formation of this ministry Lord Eldon does not appear even to have been consulted; and this circumstance at first caused some surprise and some discontent, the first of which afterwards very speedily dissipated. To those who, at this distance of time, contemplate the circumstances, there can be little doubt that Mr Peel was the cause of this total neglect of Lord Eldon, whose especial favourite he had been. The fact was, Mr Peel thoroughly understood the character of the ex-chancellor, without ever having been understood by him. He knew very well that all the old Earl's professions as to his wish to retire from political life were like the tears which he sometimes shed when it suited him to be pathetic—that is to say, the reverse of what they appeared to be. But whilst he saw this, he also saw that the coming time would demand a chancellor of different character; and this chancellor Mr Canning had supplied in the person of Lord Lyndhurst. There need, therefore, be little doubt that Mr Peel had impressed upon the Duke the necessity of acting independently of the old Tory peer, who was pretty sure to prove a source of embarrassment, if he proved nothing else; and this feeling runs clearly enough through the whole of the characteristic letter which, a few days afterwards, the *protegé* wrote to the former patron.* Lord Eldon's own account of

* The following truly characteristic epistle needs no comment:—

WHITEHALL GARDENS, January 26, 1828,
Saturday night.

MY DEAR LORD ELDON,

It was not until this day that my appoint-

his interview with Wellington evidences sufficiently that he was deliberately *shelved.*

"A fortnight ago last Friday (says Lord Eldon to his daughter Lady Bankes) he called upon me, and proceeded to state the difficulties he found himself involved in from various conflicting claimants for office. Being sure I could not be mistaken as to what this was to lead to, I told him, as I thought he had

ment to the office of Home Secretary of State was completed by my taking the oaths in Council.

My first act is to express to you my deep regret that any circumstances should have occurred carrying with them the remotest appearance of a separation from you in public life. All the impressions of affectionate regard and esteem for you, derived from long and unreserved intercourse, are much too deeply engraven on my mind to be ever effaced or weakened. I am grateful to you for the uniform kindness I have experienced from you from my first entrance into public life; proud of having possessed your confidence; and most anxious to retain, without reference to politics, your personal goodwill and esteem.

My return to public life has been no source of gratification to me. In common with the Duke of Wellington, hitherto, at least, I have had nothing to contemplate but painful sacrifices, so far as private feelings are concerned.

For the last ten days, except when I was *compelled* to disregard the commands of my physician, I have been confined to the house. I hope, however, to be able to call on you very soon. It shall be the first visit I pay.

With the sincerest prayer for your health, and that every comfort and happiness may attend you,

Believe me,
My dear Lord Eldon,
With true esteem and affection,
Most faithfully yours,
ROBERT PEEL.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Eldon,
&c. &c. &c.

come to mention the Chancellorship, I desired him not to consider me as a conflicting claimant *for that office;* that if they had any proper person to fill it, it was obvious, from what I said upon my resignation of it, that I could have nothing to do *with that office*—(indeed no serious offer after that could be made of it). No offer, therefore, was made to me of *it*, and the Duke left me without more said."—*January* 30, 1828.

No one who reads this brief passage can seriously doubt of Lord Eldon's belief that he was laid upon the shelf deliberately, though it may be doubted whether at that moment he saw at whose instigation he had been excluded. That the same influence which kept out the inconvenient Lord Eldon kept in Mr Huskisson, maugre the Duke's strong personal dislike to that very questionable personage, is highly probable. Mr Peel, no doubt, wanted his assistance both in effecting those changes which he now began to contemplate, and also on matters connected with trade, in which he was versed, and upon his perfect general pliability he in all likelihood reckoned, though, as the event proved, somewhat too confidently. Be that as it may, both incidents caused some surprise, though, to all who will carefully contemplate the enormous difficulties of the position of the new administration, wonder is certainly on this point superfluous; and, before proceeding further, it may be well to take a deliberate review of that position.

To those who narrowly observed the signs of the times, it was palpable from the first that, though to ordinary politicians, who reckoned upon the stern matter-of-fact and straightforward character of the

soldier Duke, this might appear a strong administration, it was yet surrounded by embarrassments of an extraordinary sort, and of various shapes and tendencies. To such reasoners it seemed an inevitable conclusion, that to some of the demands made upon it the new government must yield, although it might possibly evade others. It was seen, by those who watched the ebbs and flows of opinion, that the tide was now running in a direction at discord with the professed principles of those intrusted with rule. There existed now good reason to believe that the strength of this current of opinion must necessarily be augmented by circumstances; and the conclusion, therefore, was, that to preserve its station the ministry must, in some things, act in contradiction to the general maxims of policy on which it was professed to be founded. That the sudden burst of popularity which greeted the final triumph of Mr Canning in 1827, made a deep impression upon the mind of his rival, was tolerably clear; and every circumstance both of domestic and foreign interest must have tended, and was then tending, to deepen that impression still further, and to prove to the Secretary for Home Affairs that events were in train which must render the preservation of the unyielding principle of the high Tory party perilous, if not impossible.

Looking at home, in the first place, it had now become an inevitable thing that all the mischief and injustice which was a necessary consequence of the Cash-payments Act of 1819, but which had been postponed for a few years by the operation of the Small-

notes Act, was now to be re-inflicted, without rational hope of alleviation, upon the country. Out of the general pressure to be thus created, and the approach of which even now began to be felt, a demand for change was sure to arise, for the same reason that causes every man who is compelled to carry a load which galls him to shift it from one shoulder to the other, and to try every change of position that may seem to promise a temporary relief. Under such circumstances, change becomes a necessity of rule; because no government can safely continue to defy a general craving of this sort, and must therefore, although they avoid making the changes really desired, consent to change of some sort, in order to amuse those whom they cannot satisfy.

In Ireland, the fuel for agitation was of a more obvious description. Mr O'Connell had now reached that full ascendency over the Catholic population of his country, which he retained to the last, or nearly to the last. During the short administration of Mr Canning, he had seen the policy of throwing oil, for a time, upon the waves of Irish agitation, and hushing, as far as possible, the stormy tides of Irish politics. This respite was now at an end. To the Peel and Wellington cabinet, O'Connell was the last man to allow of fair play. To them his opposition neither admitted of mercy nor mitigation. For Mr Peel especially he entertained a hatred lasting and virulent, which he never scrupled to express either in word or in deed. It was personal as well as political; and happily did he express it when he said, "the very smile of Peel reminded him

of the plate upon a coffin!" The accession of Peel and Wellington to office was therefore the signal for the revival of Catholic agitation. This Mr Peel well knew; and he felt also that if it could not be evaded it must be met somehow, for law was impotent to suppress it. Over all the acts of parliament framed with a view to this end, the legal acuteness and ingenuity of the great agitator had enabled him to pass unscathed; and every day was now adding to his power and extending the universality of his influence. Thus, at home, the elements of division and weakness were rife; whilst the opposition was again a united body. The death of Canning, and the shortcomings of the imbecile administration of Lord Goderich, had demonstrated the foresight of Earl Grey, and reconciled him to his party. The Whig party had therefore now only one safe game to play, and that was to watch the turn of events, and take advantage of the first eventuality which might enable them once more to sever the reconstructed cabinet and divide the hardly-united Tory party.

Abroad, as at home, ominous clouds lowered upon the political horizon. France, under the wise rule of Louis XVIII. and his cautious minister Villele, had recovered somewhat from the exhaustion caused by the confusion and agony of the first revolution, the military drains of Napoleon, and the heavy exactions of the allies, and was now in a state of comparative ease and prosperity. But it had now become apparent that she was fast losing all she derived from this good

and sagacious prince, who knew how to deal at once with the madness of the royalists, the intolerant fanaticism of the priests and their dupes, and the wild theories of the ultra-democrats; and who, after the expedition to Spain, had become popular even with that army which, a few years before, had done its utmost to drive him from his throne. It was now known that this really meritorious prince could not transmit his prudence, nor benefit France by his example much longer; for, from his at once imbecile and bigoted successor, the Count d'Artois, now Charles X., no one expected anything but mischief.

Germany, under the leaden rule of Prince Metternich, who really swayed all, was, though full of smothered discontents, kept quiet by a military domination, assisted by a system of police espionage which penetrated everywhere. In Portugal, the dissensions engendered by disputes as to the succession and religious jealousies, were sedulously fomented by the Spanish government, who detested British influence, and hoped now to paralyze it. And, lastly, Russia, having destroyed the naval power of the Sultan by the catastrophe at Navarino, aware of the decrepitude and declining powers of Louis XVIII., and judging that Great Britain, distracted by frequent changes of ministry, and crippled by financial embarrassments and domestic broils and factions, was in no condition to interfere abroad, had re-commenced against the Ottoman Empire that system of pertinacious and insidious aggression which, planned by Peter the Great,

has been continued by his successors whenever opportunities for encroachment presented themselves.* Surrounded thus by embarrassments, domestic and foreign, present or advancing, the new ministry, though to the eye of the cursory observer composed of strong materials, and strengthened further by the character for honest purpose popularly attributed to the Duke of Wellington, was yet in reality a ministry of change and weakness, and more likely to be acted upon than to act by any inherent power of its own. The undercurrent of popular opinion was really against it. The monetary pressure on the country, which every day now augmented, was daily sapping its influence; and to domestic commercial difficulties and humiliations, the ambition of the Czar was now preparing to add. Such was the position of affairs when parliament met on the 29th January 1828.

The speech from the throne, after brief notice of the conflict in Greece, and stating the hopes that existed of still preserving peace between the Sultan and the Czar, which recent events had endangered,

* The following is no bad specimen of Russian *female* espionage,—a system by means of which the astute statesmen of that country profit largely:—

Lord Eldon to Lady F. J. Bankes (Extract.)

1828 (*probably February*), *House of Lords.*

"I don't know whether I told you that *Princess Lieven* asked me, at the Duchess of Kent's, *why* I was not a minister? An impertinent interrogatory! She asked me for a *sincere* answer. I told her I would give her a sincere answer. My answer was, 'I don't know why I was not a minister!'"—*Life of Lord Eldon, by Twiss*, vol. iii. p. 34.

lamented the conflict which took place at Navarino, which it characterized, and truly, as "an untoward event." It also admitted and regretted the diminution of the revenue; stating, at the same time, that an increase in the export trade of the country had taken place. These were the principal topics of the speech, in which the omission of all reference to the state of Ireland was significantly remarkable. The debate that followed the speech, when the address in answer to it was proposed in the Commons, was of little interest, and consequently flat and languid. It turned chiefly on the disastrous collision in the Bay of Navarino, and the treaty which led to that ill-judged and infatuated interference. The address was agreed to without a division. Although, however, the commencement of session was after this quiet fashion, it was soon felt that the opposition were aware of the turn which the current of opinions was taking, and would not be slow to take advantage of it.

Lord John Russell had, prior to the accession of Mr Canning to power in 1827, given notice of a motion for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; which motion, however, the House had permitted him to withdraw, on the ground that at that juncture, its success, or the want of it, might, in either event, act injuriously upon the cause of the Catholics. This was the colourable reason; but the real ground was, lest the success of such a motion might seriously injure the stability (such as it was) of Mr Canning's ephemeral government. The brief career of that government was now finished; and Lord John, freed

from his trammels, again brought his motion forward. The blow was both well-timed and insidious. There existed excellent grounds for the whole argument against the continuance of these acts; and these grounds were of a nature to weigh with all who were not zealous partisans of high church principles. The acts had, in fact, been for a lengthened period in abeyance. They were both enacted during the reign of Charles II.—the Corporation Act as a means of shutting the Puritans and all other Dissenters out of corporations; the Test Act as a means of keeping Catholics out of the cabinet, when both Charles and his brother James (afterwards James II.) had become more than suspected of a leaning to the Catholic form of religion. After the accession of the Hanover line, however, these acts were gradually suffered to sleep. The Dissenters were now loyal; and no one suspected the Hanoverian line of any love of Popery. Dissenters had therefore crept by degrees both into corporations and into the government; and bills of indemnity were passed from time to time to save those who had not complied with the acts, which went to compel every recipient of office and every member of a body corporate to take the sacrament according to the ritual of the Church of England, within a certain number of days. Thus, practically speaking, there was no grievance arising out of these statutes; but they remained a weapon in the armoury of the church, ready on emergency to purge cabinets and corporate bodies of her foes.

Lord John's motion was for a committee of the whole

House to consider the Test and Corporation Acts—that is to say, to revise so much of them as required the sacramental test in the cases alluded to. This proposal was made by Lord John in a speech of very considerable length and not inconsiderable ability. His argument rested principally on the points—first, that the occasions for these acts were now past and obsolete; and that it was useless to continue statutes on the book, and pass bills of indemnity for all who violated them; and next, that it was injurious to religion to make the most solemn and awful of all Christian rites into a mere political engine, to the desecration of all true feeling of the nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Lord John argued also that Dissenters, generally, were not meant to be excluded, as at that time, excepting ultra-Puritans, the Presbyterian body did not object to this sacramental ceremonial according to the ritual of the Church, as understood by them.

After a speech in opposition by Sir Harry Inglis, who argued that no desecration of religion could arise from an act calling upon men in certain positions to do that which all men who agreed with the Church of England were already bound to do—that is to say, to communicate at least three times a-year; and another by Mr Huskisson, who argued that the Catholic question might suffer if the Test Act were repealed; and after speeches in support of the proposition by Lords Althorp, Nugent, and Milton, Mr Peel rose to oppose the motion. It is not easy, after a calm perusal of the right honourable gentleman's address on this occasion, to avoid suspecting that,

aware of the change in the current of general opinion, and aware of the possible result of a division, he took purposely the lowest ground of opposition, and almost consented beforehand to the repeal proposed. After appealing to Mr William Smith, M.P. for Norwich, (a Unitarian Dissenter), as to the liberal support he had given that gentleman in some proposed arrangements as to Dissenters' Marriages, he proceeded to argue the question on its merits, first somewhat unnecessarily going over a list of statesmen who, in former times, objected to the removal of these tests. In his argument, Mr Peel however carefully avoided the high ground of the dominance of the Church of England.

"I am not prepared, I confess (said the right honourable Secretary), to argue that this question is essentially interwoven with the protection of the Church of England. I am far from thinking that the two are so connected, that the Church must fall if the Test and Corporation Acts are repealed; but in considering whether such ancient laws as these ought to be repealed—to argue thus—'Should we enact them now?' is not, in my opinion, by any means a fair mode of viewing the question. Whether we should or should not enact such laws in modern times, is not the test to judge of the propriety of repealing laws in an ancient monarchy, when manners and customs have grown up and become interwoven with the laws. I must say the principles on which I am disposed to look at these laws, with the exception of their bearing, of course, upon the Catholic question, are the same with those laid down by my right honourable friend (Mr Huskisson). * * * Is then any great practical grievance complained of?"

Mr Peel then proceeded to show that the very

grounds alleged by Lord John Russell, as constituting a reason for the repeal of these laws, was just as good an argument for letting them stand. If no practical grievance to anybody (said Mr Peel) results from the removal of these acts, there is just as little harm in letting them alone,—a mode of ratiocination which certainly resembles the well-known arrangement of "heads, I win; tails, you lose." In conclusion, as if he in some degree foresaw the upshot of the division, the Secretary let himself gently down, after the following courteous and conciliatory fashion:—

"The fact is, sir (said Mr Peel), that the existing law merely gives a *nominal* predominance to the Established Church. A predominance of some sort will be admitted, on all hands, to be necessary, and the present is as slight a one as can well be imagined. Therefore, sir, I confess I am sorry that I am called upon to vote upon this question at all (hear, hear), and heartily wish it had been allowed to remain quiescent; practically offensive, as I am convinced it is, to no one. All the intercourse between the Dissenters and the members of the Established Church has been, of late years, marked by the utmost cordiality; and I regret that any chance should be hazarded by which it is possible that temperate and candid feeling may be weakened. What the issue of the debate of this night may be I cannot say; but of this I am certain, that I have entered into it with every disposition to assert and protect the real rights and privileges of the Dissenting body. If the motion of the noble lord opposite shall chance to be defeated, any triumph that I may feel from the success of my own policy, or my own opinions, will be greatly abated indeed by the fact that such a result must be attended by disappointment to a class of persons for whom I have the highest respect; I may add, the warmest feelings of personal kindness."

After a speech from Mr Brougham in favour of, and one from Lord Palmerston against Lord John Russell's proposal, the motion was carried, amidst loud and prolonged cheers, by a majority of forty-four, 430 members, in all, voting. From the tone of Mr Peel's speech, everybody concluded that he expected a strong division against him; but this result probably took him, as it did most other persons, by surprise. At all events, it settled the fate of the Test and Corporation Laws; and the exultation with which it was everywhere received by the Liberal party proved that its real tendency was fully appreciated, although its actual significance was cautiously left unalluded to during the entire debate of the 26th February 1828.

When ancient laws of this nature are touched, the real importance of the movement resides in the indication of the tendency of opinion. The division on Lord John Russell's motion was of first-rate importance in this view. It proved that the idea of a dominant church, and the *prestige* with which the Establishment was once clothed, were fading away; and that the different creeds of sects and conflicts of doctrine, which once were sufficient to agitate the nation, were now beginning to be held of minor importance. In short, it proved that real toleration, and a calm and philosophical mode of dealing with theological questions, were becoming prevalent. It did not suit the speakers on either side to say this, or to admit it in words; and hence the question was argued as if it were of no real importance at all which way the decision went. But it was not so viewed by the public. Instead of in-

juring the Catholic cause, thinking men saw in it a precursor of the success of that question. They saw that a change had come over the spirit of the legislature; that change being the effect of a change in public opinion, which had now penetrated into the Houses of Parliament.

Of a very opposite nature were the proceedings which, during this session of parliament, took place with respect to the disfranchisement of the two rotten or close boroughs (as they were called) of Penryn and East Retford, which proceedings eventuated in the dismissal of Mr Huskisson (for a dismissal it was) from the administration. This was a matter of very minor consequence in the abstract; but it was important as evidence of the temper of the ruling powers as to a matter of paramount interest—that is to say, as to the question of a reform in the representation. The circumstances were shortly these: Two close boroughs, East Retford and Penryn, had been convicted of corruption (which was indeed perfectly notorious); and bills were before parliament for disfranchising both, and transferring the franchise to some other place. A bill had passed the House of Commons, and was then before the Peers, which went to enact the disfranchisement of Penryn, and to transfer the franchise to the great manufacturing town of Manchester. This precedent was, however, very unpalatable to a majority of the Peers, and amongst the rest to the Prime Minister, who was utterly opposed to every idea of any reform in the constitution of the House of Commons, which he no doubt believed to be a perilous

innovation and a perilous precedent. In point of fact, there can exist no doubt that the opinion of the Duke was, that if Manchester were thus favoured there would be no end to the demands from other great unrepresented towns, and no end to the attacks upon close or rotten boroughs, one including the other. To the majority of the Lords, who were owners of close boroughs, the proposal as to Penryn could not but be distasteful in the highest degree. It was so; and it became known that the Lords were resolved to either throw out the bill, or alter it so as to give the franchise to the adjoining hundred. By this conduct the peers had placed Mr Huskisson, who as a minister was unacceptable to them fully more than Mr Canning was, in a very awkward dilemma. Mistakenly relying upon the Penryn bill, which enacted the transfer of that franchise to Manchester, Mr Huskisson, when the case of East Retford was debated, had unwarily said that, until the fate of the Penryn bill was known, he could not make up his mind as to any transfer of the East Retford franchise; but unluckily adding that, had the case been not connected with any other, he should have preferred giving the franchise to Birmingham. As soon, therefore, as the course of the Peers as to the Penryn bill became public, the advocates for Birmingham claimed Mr Huskisson's vote for that transfer, which the right honourable gentleman very honourably accorded.

To the military Premier Mr Huskisson was disagreeable on many accounts. To a person of the straightforward and unbending character which was that

of the Duke, Mr Huskisson's early history must have appeared suspicious. He is said to have sided, in youth, with the ultra-democratic party; and at one time to have been a member of the celebrated club of the Jacobins at Paris. Returning to England to avoid the perils of the reign of terror, he found it necessary or at least convenient to change sides, and by some means contrived to ingratiate himself with Mr Pitt, who found his knowledge of trading matters very useful. His early speculative habits hung about him however; and he joined the party of political economists who became so unhappily powerful in the House of Commons under the leadership of Mr Horner. Towards the reformers he was also known to have some leanings; and this was enough to render him an object of suspicion with the high Tory party in the Peers, who would not tolerate even the mention of a reformation of the constitution of the House of Commons.

Upon the mind of Wellington Mr Huskisson's vote on the East Retford question produced a decisive effect. The Duke was too experienced a judge of human nature and character not to know the truth that, if men begin to speculate in one direction, the spirit of inquiry and innovation insensibly extends itself in many directions; so interwoven are human affairs. The Duke knew that if a man determines to be a bigot upon one subject, he must, to secure his position, be a bigot all round: hence Mr Huskisson's vote at once alarmed him, and he saw immediately in prospect the introduction into the government

of the perilous principle (as viewed by him) of innovation in the system of representation. In this case, the Duke acted upon his usual tactics; and those who knew him more intimately than Mr Huskisson, or even Mr Peel on this occasion seems to have done, saw at once all that followed was to happen.

As soon as the division was taken, Mr Huskisson perceived, by the looks and expressions of many around him, that he had, as a politician, made a false step; and in politics, as in war, a false step cannot be made without the fault being expiated in some way. Irritated by these feelings, Mr Huskisson, on his return from the House, wrote a letter to the Premier, which will certainly admit of two interpretations, but which the Duke, having got him into this position, determined to interpret after the fashion that suited his purpose.* When Mr Huskisson became aware of this,

* This letter was as follows.—Mr Huskisson's intention was to give the Duke the option of accepting his resignation, without however expecting that it would be accepted; but he reckoned without his host.

(Private and confidential.)

Downing Street,
Tuesday Morning, 2 A.M.
20th May 1828.

My dear Duke,

After the vote which, in regard to my own consistency and personal character, I have found myself from the course of this evening's debate compelled to give on the East Retford question, I owe to you as the head of the administration, and to Mr Peel as leader of the House of Commons, to lose no time in affording you an opportunity of placing my office in other hands, as the only means in my power of preventing injury to the King's

he, with a remarkable want of knowledge of the character with whom he now had to deal, endeavoured to explain away the interpretation which the Duke put upon his letter; and Mr Peel, who seems to have been quite willing to accept Mr Huskisson's gloss, went to the Duke of Wellington himself to offer this explanation. But the downright Premier was not to be so moved from his position. Like Sir Lucius O'Trigger, he deemed "the quarrel as it stood was a very pretty quarrel, and that explanations would only spoil it." The Duke had in fact made up his mind to get rid of Huskisson. He insisted that the writer's real design was to degrade his government by forcing it to ask Mr Huskisson to remain. He said this was the plain meaning and intent of the note. "It was no mistake: it could be no mistake, and it should be no mistake." The result was, that Mr Huskisson was no longer a member of the ministry.

The dismissal of Mr Huskisson by the Duke of Wellington (for such it in truth was) may seem a matter of minor importance; but this is not the way to view it. In itself it was of minor importance; but as an indication of policy, and in the effect of that indication upon the public mind, it was of the first im-

service, which may ensue from the appearance of disunion in his Majesty's councils, however unfounded in reality, or however unimportant in itself, the question which has given rise to that appearance.

Regretting the necessity of troubling you with this communication,

Believe me, my dear Duke, ever truly yours,

W. Huskisson.

portance. From this act of the Duke the discerning part of the public gathered this much;—that it was the first determination of the powerful party of which he was the leader and the organ, to resist every proposal, however moderate, to improve the representation, and that this denial even of the slightest concession in this direction, helped to raise up that agitation which ultimately broke up the Peel and Wellington cabinet, is not a matter for doubt. Amongst other strange things, it assisted to bring about that junction of the opponents of Mr Peel's Cash-payments Act with the radical reformers and the adherents of Mr Cobbett and his doctrines, which took shape in the celebrated Birmingham Union. Mr Thomas Attwood and his friends, who until then had been of the Tory party, now saw that, whilst the Duke of Wellington held power, not even the slightest progress towards a reform in parliament would be made; and they also saw that, without such a change, the mischiefs of the act of 1819, in all their injustice, must rage on, with such temporary alleviations only as chance and the turn of events might produce. They therefore determined to unite for a time with the radical reformers, and to destroy the Peel and Wellington government; deeming that a reformed parliament must redress that monstrous injustice. Thus another section of the powerful high Tory party was dissevered from it. It was not numerous; but it consisted of men of reflecting minds, of strong wills, and of determined energy and courage; and such men are never to be safely despised.

It is to this moment a matter of some doubt what Mr Peel's real inclinations as to the division on the East Retford matter really were. Seeing what the Premier's were, he was too cautious to enunciate his own. He was, however, manifestly inclined to accept Mr Huskisson's explanations; nor is it at discord with his character to suppose that, on this subject, his views might not be different, in one respect, from those of the Secretary for the Colonies. That, in the abstract, Mr Peel was just as little inclined to hazard experiments upon the constitution of that which is called the popular branch of the legislature as was the Prime Minister, may be readily admitted; but he was much more attentive to the aspect of public opinion. One of the principal errors of Wellington as a politician was, that he estimated the power of public opinion much too lightly. As a commander, he had learned not to despise an enemy too much; and caution in all cases characterized his military career. As a politician, he never learned this salutary lesson. To him county-meetings were really and truly "farces;" and it was evident that, up to the close of his power, he regarded the persons called "reformers" as much more contemptible than formidable. Not so Mr Peel. That he viewed the schemes and theories of the advocates of Parliamentary Reform with dislike and apprehension, everybody was aware; but he was too sagacious an observer of all the changes and phases of opinion, not to perceive the direction which the public mind was now taking with regard to this matter. Hence it is by no means

improbable that, had the Home Secretary found his military colleague accessible on this point, he might have deemed it advisable to quiet a growing irritation by yielding a trifle. That, by this course, the violent explosion of opinion which took place two years afterwards might have been mitigated, or possibly avoided, seems evident; and a crisis would thus have been averted, which must, in its results, have revolutionized any people more excitable and less practical, less moderate and less accustomed to the machinery of self-government, than are those of England.

In the midst of these party feuds in the cabinet itself, the claims of the Catholics were again brought before parliament by Sir Francis Burdett, in a speech of great force and ability, improved by that animation which a disputant always derives from the consciousness that the cause for which he argues is obtaining daily converts. The same consciousness paralyzed the opposition of the government. The whole ground was gone over again. The pledge given by Mr Pitt that the fruit of the Act of Union should be the emancipation of the Catholics, was again asserted by Sir Francis Burdett, and denied again by Mr Peel,—the first meaning by the word pledge a virtual and understood compact; the second meaning by the word pledge a contract in express words, which no minister could give. But the addresses of Mr Peel and the whole of the speakers from the government benches were evidently toned down to the situation; whilst the speeches of the Catholic advocates were all animated by the conviction that no government could

now much longer resist the measure, and that another session of parliament must decide it. This was very strongly stated by Mr William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne), who said that if all those who were of opinion that the measure must be, sooner or later, entertained, would vote for it *now*, the motion before the House would be carried by a majority numerically greater than any on the records of parliament. The conclusion of Mr Peel's speech, indeed, almost admitted this; and all who heard it felt that further opposition to the Catholic claims was really seen by him to be now useless. "Retaining my opinions (said the right honourable secretary), I must sit down, as I commenced, with stating that, notwithstanding the high authorities cited in opposition to me, it is still not just and not expedient, *in the present balanced state of the government and of parliament*, that the Roman-catholics and Protestants of Ireland should stand, in respect of civil offices, upon precisely the same footing." This was almost a surrender in so many words, putting, as it did, opposition upon a basis which a single week might destroy. The motion of Sir Francis Burdett was carried by a majority of six, being the last great division upon this question as an opposition question in the House of Commons. A similar motion by Lord Lansdowne in the Upper House was negatived by the Peers by a majority of forty-four.

Whilst these fruitless and noisy discussions were agitating both Houses of Parliament, a combination of events was taking place, at home and abroad, of a nature to render the pacification of Ireland a plain

matter of pressing, urgent, and immediate necessity, not to be resisted by any ministers possessed of common prudence and foresight. In the first place, the nation was now on the eve of being subjected, for the second time, to the full force of the Cash-payments Act of 1819, with less hope of escape than before. The pressure of the screw in 1822-'3 had produced the Small-note Act of that period, which perished amidst the ruin of the crisis which ensued in December 1825. The process of 1822-'3 was now again to be gone through, without any rational hope of alleviation, either through the medium of a second Small-note Act or any other measure really calculated to diminish the injustice of the act of 1819. It could not be expected that the Premier, whose earlier life had been spent amidst the stirring scenes of his Indian and Spanish campaigns, could either understand or grapple with such a question; and Mr Peel was too deeply pledged to the deplorable errors of the Economists to retrace his course, however necessary retracement might become. In short, the question now took this shape,—Whatever might be the risk of going on, the risk of re-opening the question was, in the view of any possible administration, much greater. As a consequence of this position of affairs, the system of Political Unions, upon the avowed principle of obtaining from a reformed parliament the measure of justice denied by one unreformed, was commenced, and a course of agitation began, which the events of the following year aggravated and extended, and which, since that time, can hardly be said ever to have really subsided, or ever

to have been likely to subside, except temporarily, when the extraordinary nature of passing events has for a time diverted attention, or palliating circumstances alleviated, for a space, evils which they could not cure.

In Ireland the position of the government was becoming daily more and more critical. The agitation, which, during the brief and troublous triumph of Mr Canning, Mr O'Connell had allowed to subside, was now renewed with an energy redoubled by the almost certainty of success. The power of the Catholic Association, to put down which acts of parliament were in vain, paralyzed every function of rule. Their recommendations had the power of ordinances or ukases. The whole Catholic priesthood became their zealous agents and partisans. Over the whole south of Ireland a single word from the Association was of power to deprive the Protestant clergyman of his tithe or the Protestant landlord of his rent; whilst the funds of the Association, under the name of "Catholic Rent," were collected with a regularity and a universality which embraced even the Catholic soldiery. It became notorious that every regiment in Ireland contributed more or less to the finances of the Association; nor did their officers dare to discountenance or even notice this perilous act of insubordination. Morally and virtually masters of Ireland, the Association now went a step beyond any they had ever before risked. They denounced both Peel and Wellington in the strongest terms as the enemies of Ireland, and put forth a resolution, which was distributed over all Ireland, to the

effect that thenceforward every Irishman, whatever might be his politics or his services, who should stoop to take any office under the existing administration, should be opposed with the whole power of the Association, be he who he might. This resolution, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been suicidal, and which nothing but the extraordinary state of the country could justify, enabled Mr O'Connell to deal one of those blows which are master-strokes, and which betoken a master-mind, unhappily, perhaps, employed in the storm of political agitation, and capable of better things, but still a mind to direct and control that storm.

After the death, from inanition, of the weakly ministry of Lord Goderich, when the Duke of Wellington formed his cabinet, Mr Grant was selected as President of the Board of Trade, a somewhat subordinate office for which he was not unfit. Towards the end of 1828 Mr Grant, however, for reasons not necessary to be recorded, resigned that post, and it became necessary to choose a successor. Willing, probably, to conciliate public opinion in Ireland, as far as it could be honourably and consistently done, the Prime Minister fixed upon Mr Vesey Fitzgerald, an Irish gentleman of good estate and high character, of the county of Clare, and a friend to Catholic Emancipation. At an ordinary time, and under more every-day circumstances, such an opposition as now was risked would have been not only an ungrateful but a useless enterprise; but when all was to be won, all was to be dared; and, to the astonishment of both

friends and foes, Mr O'Connell declared himself a candidate, and was elected member of the Imperial Parliament for the county of Clare. The fiat of the Association proved omnipotent. The ties which bind the receiver of services to the giver, which bind the tenant to the landlord, the politician to his party-friend, were at once torn asunder like gossamer. Mr Fitzgerald's claims and character were powerless to aid him. He had condescended to serve under "the enemies of Ireland," and he was treated as if he was himself her enemy. The election for Clare was like a sudden thunder-clap, startling, ominous, and strangely timed; and its echoes were heard in every hamlet, not only of Ireland, but of the three kingdoms. It terrified many, astounded most, and instructed a few.

Reflective men now felt that the hour of Catholic emancipation had struck. The anomalous state of the law of exclusion had enabled Mr O'Connell to deliver this final blow. As a Catholic, he was not ineligible at the hustings. There was no law to prevent his nomination, nor to preclude the sheriff from receiving the votes which the Catholic voters, almost to a man, crowded to give him. He was only excluded from his seat in the House of Commons by an oath, which, when tendered, he must refuse to take. But he could knock legally at the door of the legislature and demand admittance, and, in the last resort, demand to be heard at the bar of the House in defence of the rights of the electors of Clare. This was a spectacle which thinking men saw could not be continued. After this example, a general election would have enabled half the counties

and three-fourths of the boroughs of Ireland to send Catholic members to the gate of the legislature, to thunder there, and demand their rights for six millions of Irish Catholics. In the then temper of the British mind this was not to be hazarded; and from that hour the government unquestionably saw that the only course left them was—concession.

Whilst these clouds of difficulty were lowering over the ministry at home, the more distant horizon was becoming overcast also as for storm. Louis XVIII. died in September 1824, lamented by all who wished for the repose of France and of Europe. He had successfully resisted the vindictive schemes of the ultra-royalists, the ambition and intolerance of the *parti prêtre*, for whom he could not conceal his utter contempt and disgust, and the strange theories of the ultra-democrats of all grades—republicans, socialists, and anarchists, which he held equally cheap. By the humiliation which (somewhat ungratefully) he inflicted upon Great Britain in 1823, he had become somewhat reconciled to the army; and could his reign have been prolonged for twenty years longer, it was possible that France might have outgrown the burdens laid upon her by the really blind policy of the allies in 1815, and settled down into a prosperous and constitutional monarchy, with moderate taxes and equal laws. These better prospects soon faded, however, before the imbecility of his contemptible successor, the Count d'Artois, now Charles X. This personage had begun life as a *roué*, and, by a gradation not uncommon in France, ended it as a bigot and a devotee. He had

for a time gone on tolerably well, under the cautious guidance of Villele, the minister of his brother. But Villele, though a conscientious royalist, was endowed with too much prudence and common sense to suit the *parti prêtre*, to whom both were entirely unknown. In consequence of this, the infatuated king had latterly given himself up to the counsels of a personage who had just talent enough to be mischievous, and just plausibility enough to mask the utter and real folly and insanity of his character and schemes. This person was M. de Polignac, the descendant of an ancient and noble French family, and filled to the brim with all the prejudices and pretensions for which the old French noblesse were so unfortunately remarkable. He had been long the favourite of the weak and short-sighted Count d'Artois, who sympathized entirely with his character as a royalist zealot and visionary.

When the Count d'Artois became Charles X., M. de Polignac was sent as ambassador to England, where he had some matrimonial connexions. Here, strange to say, in consequence of that tendency which sometimes binds together men of the most opposite characters, he contrived to ingratiate himself with the cautious and practical Duke of Wellington, at the same time that he was engaged in hatching schemes the most absurd for the restoration of the old and effete system of arbitrary power in France. In furtherance of these foolish plots, had been brought over from France a lawyer of the name of Cottu. His ostensible mission was to study the system of the administration of justice in England; but his real intention was to hatch, with

M. de Polignac, plots against the government established in France. It would be the height of injustice even to insinuate that these designs were countenanced in the slightest degree either by the Duke of Wellington or his cabinet. In point of fact, he must have known better than most men the insanity of such an attempt. But it is not easy to conceive the possibility even of these conspiracies being entirely unknown to the British ministry; for it seems quite clear that they were not only known to, but countenanced by, persons in England, less wise and less scrupulous, who at last took little pains to conceal their cognizance of some attempt in this direction being about to be ventured. This rests upon evidence sufficiently direct and unquestionable.

Amongst other devices, a treatise, ostensibly by M. Cottu, but which there seems reason to suspect to have been written first in English by an English writer, and afterwards translated into French, was published, first in France, and afterwards in England, containing some statements of a very extraordinary sort relative to the real nature of the existing British system of rule. That this tract was composed originally in English, may be inferred from the fact that the English version, as far as known, is pure idiomatic English, with none of the stiffness of a translation, whilst the French version, which was published first, abounds in Anglicisms, and has all the air of a translation. Its purport was to show that the British system of representation was not that which it was vulgarly believed to be; but that the real power was lodged in

the hands of a small number of peers and rich commoners, who commanded a large majority of the Commons without being seen to do so. The inference was, that when the chamber of French Deputies was established in 1815, in imitation of the British Commons House, a great blunder was made; and that, to render the French government as safe as the British, the king and peers must be made all but absolute.

The English version of this significant pamphlet seems to have been circulated amongst certain circles here in the years 1829–30; and in due time—that is to say, in May 1830—an elaborate article upon this same subject, attributed by common fame to the pen of Captain Basil Hall, a notorious party-writer of the day, graced the pages of the *Quarterly Review*, in which a probable assumption of arbitrary power on the part of the infatuated Charles X. was not only foreshadowed but excused, as far as the writer could find or invent excuses for it. That the imprudent plots hatching in France could not be unknown to the British cabinet, when so little pains were taken to conceal them, seems to be all but a matter of necessity; and in this knowledge we find a strong and urgent motive to induce the Wellington administration to pacify Ireland at all risks. They must have known that the execution of such a scheme by the hands of such men as Charles and De Polignac, was all but certain to produce, amongst a people at once so brave, so excitable, and so military as the French, an explosion which must shatter the Bourbon *régime* and government to fragments; and, with Ireland in its then state, upon the

verge of outbreak, with the fidelity of large portions of the troops very doubtful, they must have felt the peril to England from the possible occurrence of such an event. It became, therefore, a matter of duty to anticipate a catastrophe, which all thinking men began now to expect, by quieting the elements of discontent then raging in Ireland; and that these circumstances were estimated at their real weight by Mr Peel, as well as by his noble colleague, can hardly be a matter of doubt.*

* The title of M. Cottu's tract was "De la Nécessité d'une Dictature, par M. Cottu, Conseiller à la Cour Royale de Paris. Publié à Paris, 1830." A review of the Letters of Count de Blacas, and other French publications, appears in the *Quarterly Review* of May 1830, which, after describing the resistance of the French Chambers to the proposed measures of Charles and De Polignac, now his adviser, proceeds thus:—"We therefore hope and trust that the King of France and his present ministers may succeed (if such be their object) in establishing a censorship on the press, and likewise in acquiring so decided a preponderance in the Chamber of Deputies, that its existence as an independent body, capable of bearding the monarchy as it has recently done, shall be no longer recognised. This, we own, will be a virtual abolition of 'the charter;' but the question is obviously reduced to this,—Shall the monarchy, which is suitable to the country, be overthrown, or shall the charter, which in every possible point of view is unsuited to it, be abrogated? It will be asked *why* need we care what France does? Why not let her do what she pleases? What have we to do with her constitutions as a nation, more than we have with the domestic arrangements of our next-door neighbour in the street? The answer to this is, unfortunately, too ready. If our neighbour merely beats his wife and children, and regulates his concerns in the worst way possible, we have no right to complain; but if he gets intoxicated and flings about firebrands, so

But this was not the only peril arising out of the critical state of foreign affairs, with which they saw they must now have to deal. More ambitions than one were at that moment at work in Europe. Russia, aware of the instability of the French government, and of the war of passions then convulsing France and paralyzing the energy of her people; and aware of the embarrassments of the Duke of Wellington's government and its growing unpopularity, arising first out of the pressure caused by the final withdrawal of the small bank-paper circulation, and next out of the

as not only to set his own house on fire, but to threaten destruction to the whole parish, we are compelled, in spite of our love of quiet, to take a lively interest in the proceedings. * * * * * * * * * * * We trust we have said enough to show that there is only one course of measures by which good order can be preserved; and, however repugnant it may be to our English tastes, the necessity of the case requires that we should not shrink from the trial, but be prepared to witness, as the less grievous of the two evils, the temporary re-establishment of a tolerably absolute authority on the part of the crown of France. If this be impossible, or if the attempt be bungled in the execution, we may bid adieu to repose, and buckle on our armour for another quarter of a century of wars! We think it is hardly possible to doubt that, unless the existing government adopts and succeeds in carrying into effect some very decisive measure in the course of the present year, there will ensue another burst of convulsion; and Napoleon has left no saying of more indisputable truth behind him than that 'a revolution in France is a revolution in Europe.'"—*Quarterly Review*, *May* 1830.

It is difficult to read these sentences without coming to the conclusion that the writer must have had some knowledge of the measures which M. de Polignac so bunglingly attempted to force on the French nation in the following July, and that M. Cottu's visit to England and his subsequent publication were a preparation for them.

unwearying machinations of the leaders of the Catholic Association in Ireland; and emboldened by the impunity with which the ministers of Louis XVIII. had struck down British influence in Spain and menaced it in Portugal; Russia, aware of these things, was recommencing that unprincipled system of aggression against the territories and power of the Sultan, which she had pursued at intervals ever since the reign of Peter the Great, and seemed now bent upon consummating at all risks and in spite of all remonstrance.

The circumstances also of the present conflict promised to be more galling to England, as a commercial country, than those of former contests had been. In the former struggles between the aggressive power and his intended prey, the Ottomans, although then overmatched, for the most part, by land, were fully a match for the Muscovites by sea. Imperfect as their naval means were, they were at all events better than those of Russia. By the deplorable and blundering catastrophe of the bay of Navarino, however, the naval power of the Sultan was all but annihilated; and the Russians were now purposing to second their operations by land by means of maritime blockades of the Turkish ports, which bid fair to interfere, in no very gentle way, with the Levant trade of Great Britain. Against these unprincipled aggressions of Russia upon her unoffending and honourable neighbour, the various British cabinets, during the last half-century, had strongly remonstrated; and on one occasion Mr Pitt, as well as his illustrious parent the great Lord Chatham, had threatened hostilities if these unprovoked and per-

petual interferences were not discontinued. The threats and firm tone of Mr Pitt arrested the victorious career of the Empress Catherine II.; but the Russian cabinet, the most astute and best informed as well as the most dishonest in Europe, now calculated that the domestic troubles and difficulties of the British ministers were sufficient to paralyze any present attempt at hostile action; and they proceeded upon this calculation. The war against Turkey was not only prosecuted by land but by sea also; and every Turkish port, whence provisions might be sent to their armies, was so closely blockaded by Russian squadrons, as to inconvenience even Constantinople itself, which derives a portion of its supplies from a distance, and to impede excessively the trade of neutral nations, and most of all of Great Britain, whose Levant trade is of great value and importance.

That these Muscovite aggressions, whether actual or in prospect, caused deep irritation and uneasiness in the cabinet of the Duke of Wellington, is beyond all doubt. Nothing could be more galling to a maritime and commercial power like that of England than the spectacle of Russian armed squadrons in the Black Sea, and also in the Mediterranean, sealing up the Turkish ports, and on one pretext or other stopping or seriously impeding the lucrative trade of these seas. In point of fact, so deep was the anger thus excited in the breast of Wellington and his political colleagues that, on the June of the year following 1829, it gave rise to an interview and a scene betwixt the great Duke and the two Muscovite envoys, Prince

Lieven and Count Matuszevich, the recital of the circumstances of which must be deeply painful to every English writer, but which recital, how painful soever, is absolutely necessary to the truth of history and to a full understanding of the combination of causes, near and remote, which influenced the acts of the ministers of Great Britain at this critical period. When we contemplate that which afterwards happened, there cannot remain a doubt that, towards the close of the year 1828, the British cabinet seriously apprehended interrupted relations with the Czar, which the proceedings of that unscrupulous potentate certainly seemed designed to precipitate.* Here we discover

* The despatch from Prince Lieven and Count Matuszevich, addressed to Count Nesselrode, under date 1st (13th) June 1829, from which the following extracts are made, was captured by the insurgent Poles, in the Archives at Warsaw in 1830, and sent to England. The entire document was printed by David Urquhart, Esq., in the *Portfolio* (*New Series*), in 1843. It was published before, with several passages omitted, in a former series of that work. It is an instructive but humiliating example of the pitch of insolence at which the Russian agents had then arrived, emboldened by British real or supposed difficulties. The discussion immediately related to the Russian blockades of the Gulf of Enos, the Dardanelles, and other maritime Mediterranean stations, contrary to an understanding that they should exercise no belligerent rights in the Mediterranean. After explaining to Count Nesselrode that the blockade of Enos was likely to cause great irritation in England, and embarrass the British ministers in Parliament, the despatch proceeds to narrate a great deal of preliminary argument between the two envoys and Lord Aberdeen, in which the Russians coolly proposed to *set aside* the British law, which provides that all regular blockades shall be "notified in the *Gazette*;" and then gives the following extraordi-

another urgent reason for the resolution to which both Mr Peel and the Premier came, doubtless at

nary detail:—"The tone of this conference was sincerely friendly. The discussion never ceased to be calm, and was far from rising to those recriminations that we had so often listened to. Lord Aberdeen took pleasure in rendering justice (*se plut à rendre une éclatante justice*) to the sentiments of the Emperor and the language of his cabinet. This first interview seemed to leave us some hope to attain a satisfactory result; nevertheless, on the following day, fixed for the reply of Lord Aberdeen, that minister sent to inform us that, before giving that reply, he thought it advisable that we should see the Duke of Wellington himself."

"This delay was not of good augur. We therefore prepared ourselves for a serious discussion with the First Lord of the Treasury.

"The *début* was not agreeable. Before entering into the subject, the First Minister informed us that, the night before, he had received intelligence of another blockade that the Count Heyden had established. He showed us two letters of that admiral, one addressed to Count Dandolo, and the other to Sir Pulteney Malcolm, announcing the blockade of the Bay of Adramiti, in the neighbourhood of Smyrna. It was easy to prove to the Duke of Wellington that, seeing the instructions sent to Count Heyden by the Imperial Ministry, this incident merited no attention, as the blockade of Adramiti, together with that of the Gulf of Contessa, would be raised; and that the only question was respecting the blockade of Enos. 'Then (said the Duke of Wellington) that blockade must be notified officially.* We will announce it in the *Gazette* of London, because it springs from a right that we do not pretend to contest, and it is effective. It therefore fulfils the required conditions. But

* The efficiency of the blockade would have to be raised in a court of justice; but it had nothing to do with the insertion in the *Gazette*:—that insertion depended on its lawfulness. England cannot suffer its vessels to be captured by a foreign state, except in the prosecution of *lawful* war; and that is the intention and value of a proclamation in the *Gazette*. In the present case, putting aside the origin and objects of this war, *a special renunciation had been made by Russia of belligerent rights* in the Mediterranean.—*Editor of the Portfolio.*

this period, to pacify Ireland at all risks. With France in combustion; with Russia aggressive; and

it will place all in a disagreeable position. This blockade is evidently directed against Adrianople. It is connected with the operations of the Russian armies against that town. These operations may bring the fall of the Ottoman Empire; and nevertheless we will have recognised it. It will then escape no one that we contribute to events that it is essential for us to prevent. Our situation will therefore become more difficult, and will present itself under a new aspect. We would be then obliged to examine it, to understand where we are, as between you and the Turks, where the Treaty of London conducts us. The Emperor has not informed us exactly (*n'a pas fait connaître au juste*) of his intentions respecting the means of terminating this war. We find ourselves in darkness. It is necessary for us, therefore, to consider the future in its possible phases; and it is what we will do when you have notified to us the maintenance of the blockade of Enos.'

"This declaration, by *which the Duke of Wellington seemed to have expected to alarm us*, we met with an exposition of the acts and words of the Emperor? We repeated what his Imperial Majesty *had not ceased to say* respecting the fall of the Ottoman empire. His language, full of moderation; his measures, always adopted under the same influence; the concessions, made by him even to the most gratuitous alarms; the guarantees, offered even by the last communications of his ministers; and *the necessity under which we should be to interpret, in an unpleasant manner, this uneasiness, the fostering of which was persisted in, notwithstanding so many motives of confidence!*

"Resuming, then, the question of the blockade of Enos, and allowing the care to be *appreciated* which the Emperor took to discuss it with his allies, and to make known the true aim of his determination, we applied ourselves to reproduce on this subject all the arguments that had appeared two days before, to shake Lord Aberdeen. They had *not* the same success with the Duke of Wellington, who limited himself to repeating, according to his custom, that which he

the English nation suffering commercially at home and abroad, no option was left them but to conciliate

had already said, and returned to his *thesis* of the probable destruction of the Ottoman empire; and persisted in declaring that, in recognising the blockade of Enos, he would be obliged to examine in council the whole position of England.

"We then thought it useful to let him perceive, and without any reserve, that, much as the Emperor was disposed to concert with his allies, and much as he was desirous of spontaneously making every sacrifice compatible with his interests when asked of him in friendship, he was equally resolved never to suffer any compromise of his dignity, never to yield to threats, and never, indeed, to admit them. We added, that such means as these, united with unjust suspicions, would lead to incalculable consequences!

"A long pause followed this declaration, which the Marshal did not appear to have foreseen. *He recovered himself at last*, and, changing his tone and manner, assured us that, if we had attributed to him the idea of distrust or of threat, we had fallen into a great error: That such had never been, nor ever could be, his intention: That he had the highest opinion of the good faith of the Emperor: That he placed an entire confidence in his words: That nevertheless, in a country like England, where everything was responsibility, and where every one pretended to understand and judge foreign politics, a statesman could not be contented with words alone, but must also consider and foresee events: But that his firm decision was always to preserve relations of reciprocal friendship between the two courts: That he had only expressed his *personal* (*sic*) opinions in order to warn us, as an honest man, of the difficult position in which we placed him; and that he was far from wishing to say besides that the result of such an examination as that of which he had spoken must necessarily be to change the relations between Russia and England; but that he had strong reasons for desiring that even this simple examination should *not* take place: That he did not wish to have disagreeable questions to address to us: he prayed us earnestly to consider whether it would not be more *useful* to allow things to remain upon the

those Catholic millions, whence a large portion of their troops were drawn, by timely concession and a full and unstinted emancipation.

footing on which they were, without provoking, by the announcement of a new blockade, such an exasperation as that which he had to deplore the former year, and to which it was necessary to avoid furnishing new elements: That people in England were of an extreme jealousy and susceptibility respecting maritime questions: That he did not pretend to question our right to blockade Enos and all the coast of Roumeli; but that at present Adrianople was provisioned by the new harvests without the assistance of the Gulf, and from that moment the importance of the blockade was singularly diminished *for us;* and that it would be better (if it were indispensable) to resume it at another period, but for the moment to avoid the grave embarrassment which would result from it to the government of his Britannic Majesty.

" 'It is, then, a proof of friendship and a testimony of regard for your position that you request from us, Monsieur le Duc, and such sentiments as these our august master may accept; but he will require to know that the dispositions with which they would inspire him should not be mistaken.'

" 'You may assure, gentlemen, his Imperial Majesty (resumed the Duke) that, if he consents to raise the blockade of Enos, we will be exceedingly obliged to him—that we will be very grateful to him. I have the conviction that an intimate friendship between England and Russia is infinitely desirable; I give you my word upon it. We will return confidence for confidence; and if it pleases the Emperor to allow us to know something of his intentions for the future, believe me that you will make this revelation to *friends*, and we will take care that nothing of it shall ever transpire.'

" These protestations were followed by several others in the same sense. When the Duke learned that under such auspices we consented to the raising of the blockade of Enos, the conference terminated itself in the most amicable manner. The Duke went so far as to declare, with surprise mingled with eulogy, that our marine, in

From and after the period of the success of Sir Francis Burdett's motion, it is certain that a feeling

maintaining the blockade of the Dardanelles, had executed an operation declared impossible by one of the first naval men in England!"

Towards the conclusion of this extraordinary document, the following remarks, singular for their mixture of cunning and insolence, are indulged in.

"We shall add, that in meditating upon the language of the Duke of Wellington and of Lord Aberdeen, it reveals the apprehension of the embarrassment which would be raised by any particular discussion, and the not less real fear of seriously indisposing us. The Prime Minister made the *amende honorable* as soon as he perceived that *his words and his bravadoes would only serve to trouble that peace which is necessary to him.* It is very perceptible that he avoids, and even dreads, the examination of the situation in which he stands; and that, according to his custom, he confides to events the care of overcoming difficulties. But the more this situation is critical, the more it would enter into his character to turn to profit the slightest incident, and to emerge from it by a *coup d'éclat.* Singular combination of timidity and audacity—the Duke of Wellington provokes often the chances which he apprehends, and thenceforth he confronts them, without calculating the real consequences of his own determinations. It would have been the more imprudent to irritate him, after his protestations and excuses, by refusing him this puny concession; as the question of the blockade really does excite the opinion of England against us, wounds the national pride, and imposes silence on those who are disposed to defend us. The news that Count Pozzo di Borgo has sent us on the position of the *French Ministry*, which is every day more and more uncertain, has also led us not to alienate from us completely the Cabinet of London, before the epoch when the answers from Constantinople would leave us no other alternative. Finally, everything proves more than ever that the general tranquillity will be maintained, in spite of the *faults* and the *passions* of the Duke of Wellington. *The cry of peace* has re-

pervaded most political circles that the emancipation of the Catholics could not possibly be much longer delayed. The measured expression of the ministers showed that they were staggered by the change of opinion now becoming palpable. In most public assemblies, when once men are persuaded that a question must ultimately be carried, that persuasion itself carries the question. All the waverers desert the falling and pass over to the winning cause: and, with regard to the Catholic cause, this was beginning to be very perceptible. New conversions were whispered every day: and although, during the remainder of the session, nothing was suffered to transpire which could denote any change of opinion in the cabinet itself, yet, when the session ended, and men saw that the royal speech made no allusion to the occurrences in Ireland, unprecedented as they were, this absence of remark was taken as a negative proof that some conciliatory measure was contemplated by the framers of

sounded in the Lower House, and has been unanimously repeated there by Tories as well as Whigs. Your Excellency will have remarked that the ministry has not dared to answer either to that part of the observations of Sir James Macintosh relative to the DANGER *of any guarantee in favour of the Ottoman territory*, nor to the speech in which Lord Palmerston (whose name is henceforth associated with those of the first orators of the parliament of England) has insisted on the preservation of the general peace, *and proved that an Austro-Turkish policy would only serve to disturb it.* Messrs Brougham and Baring have spoken in the same sense, amid the 'hears' of the House;—and it is probable that, *aided by our moderation*, this salutary disposition will every day make fresh proselytes!"

the speech, and men looked forward to the year 1829 as an *annus mirabilis*, or year of change, big with events and portents of events. The other incidents of the session were of minor importance. In Portugal, where the succession was fiercely debated between the partisans of Don Miguel and those of Donna Maria, the people, in general led by the priesthood, exhibited the same hatred to a British influence in their government as had been shown in Spain; and, had the country been of equal extent, a popular insurrection, secretly aided by Spain, would unquestionably have ended in favour of Miguel. Portugal, however, was too diminutive to resist the will of England, and a British fleet at Lisbon controlled events; whilst Russia, whose designs on the independence of Turkey no blindness could misunderstand, was conciliated by a studiously complaisant phraseology, and her conduct as to the blockades eulogized as a condescension. Such were the results of a combination of difficulties, than which few periods of our history have presented any more formidable. With a growing monetary pressure in England; with a moral insurrection in Ireland; with uncontrollable madness in France; and with uncontrolled aggression in Turkey, the Wellington and Peel ministry had now to contend; and few now, of whatever creed in religion or politics, will be inclined severely to blame them for feeling themselves driven by events to attempt to conciliate a large portion of the empire, which a negative persecution (for such all exclusive religious codes are) had almost alienated from their allegiance.

Before the close of the year, the suspicion that government contemplated some great conciliatory measure relative to the Catholic portion of the community, was still further strengthened, either by the rashness or the policy of Mr George Dawson, Mr Peel's brother-in-law.

At a public dinner, given at Londonderry to celebrate the memorable siege of the city by the troops of James II., and its gallant resistance, Mr Dawson ventured to make a speech, in which, after depicting the critical state of Ireland, the paralysis of all the powers of government, and the immense power of the Catholic Association, he boldly declared that the time was now come when concession was the only alternative of civil strife. This speech, emanating from a man who up to that time had been one of the most zealous and intemperate opponents of emancipation, produced a prodigious sensation in Ireland. The address, being volunteered by so near a connexion of the Home Secretary, was attributed by many to Mr Peel himself. It was held to be a feeler put forth by the British government to test the state of public opinion in Ireland. The consternation and rage of the Orange party were therefore extreme; whilst the Catholics, deeming the Secretary as one of their most implacable foes, and puzzled by the pertinacity and confidence with which the government press everywhere denied all intention to concede on the part of the cabinet, were led to deem the rumours of conciliation which filled men's mouths as news "too good to be true,"

and their vituperations of the Peel and Wellington ministry continued unabated.

To all this uncertainty the sudden dismissal of the Marquis of Anglesey, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, contributed more of uncertainty. The marquis, although strongly attached to the Tory party as a general politician, was known to entertain strong opinions on the impolicy of the penal or exclusive laws affecting the Catholics; and his intercourse with many of the Catholic leaders and prelates was cordial and frequent. Between Dr Curtis, one of these prelates, and the Premier, some rather interesting correspondence was, about this time, taking place. Dr Curtis, who some years before had held a high station in the Spanish University of Salamanca, had, during the Spanish contest with Napoleon, done considerable service to the Duke; and this naturally led to a friendly intercourse, very honourable to both, which continued through life. Dr Curtis was now in Ireland and a Catholic Bishop; and, deploring the agitated state of his country, the bishop had ventured to lay before the minister his impressions on the subject. To the bishop's letter the Duke of Wellington made a brief reply, in which, lamenting the party passions of Ireland, he said he saw no hope of a settlement whilst these passions tore society to pieces, and precluded all calm discussion. The Duke further proposed that the question should be "buried in oblivion" for a time, to allow passion to cool and reason to resume its sway. Dr Curtis, having submitted to the Lord Lieutenant

copies of these letters, the marquis replied to Dr Curtis in a somewhat elaborate epistle, in which he strongly advocated the repeal of all the enactments complained of, and ridiculed the Duke's proposal to bury the question in oblivion as an utter impossibility, but concluded by recommending moderation. This letter was produced in the Catholic Association; and this rash step not only compromised the marquis, but also put the ministry into an awkward dilemma. To leave such a letter, from such a personage, unnoticed, would have been a tacit sanction of the writer and his opinions. But upon this the administration was in no position to venture; and dismissal was the sole alternative. The marquis was accordingly, to the dismay of the Catholic party, deprived of the office of Lord Lieutenant, to which the Duke of Northumberland succeeded. Thus, whilst Mr Dawson, the Home Secretary's near relative, was embracing the opinions of the Lord Lieutenant, the Lord Lieutenant was cashiered for declaring himself of the opinions now openly adopted by Mr Dawson. From such cross-purposes as these no certain conclusion could be drawn; and the war of words and the machinery of agitation went on in Ireland until the meeting of parliament in the memorable year 1829; the epoch of triumph for Mr O'Connell, and complete liberation for the Catholics from the remains of that penal code against which they had striven so long.

CHAPTER XI.

The Catholic Claims yielded—Surprise of the Nation—Resistance by the King—Critical Position of Ministers—Duke of Cumberland adverse—Lords Eldon and Winchilsea protest against it—Duke of Cumberland's Speech—Supported by the Dukes of Clarence and Sussex—Great Effect of this—Mr Peel resigns his Seat for Oxford—Sir H. Inglis elected—Intense Political Ferment—Mr Peel brings in the Bill—His Explanations as to his own Conduct—Effect of his Address out of Doors—Mr Sadler opposes the Bill—Irritation of the Peers—Duel between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Winchilsea—Mr Peel's Account of his Conduct to Mr Canning—Open Air Meetings—Pennenden Heath Meeting—Russia Attacks the Sultan—Diebitch Forces the Balkan—Alarm of Metternich—Treaty of Adrianople—Prince Polignac's Plots in France—Becomes Prime Minister—Great Depression in Trade—Birmingham Petition.

THE secret of the ministry had been well and faithfully kept. Up to the latest moment, the journals in the pay of the government party had strenuously contradicted every rumour which went to attribute to the administration an intention to relax, or entirely to sweep away, the disabilities of those holding the Catholic faith and openly being members of the Catholic communion. When, therefore, on the 5th February 1829, the King's speech from the throne,

after regretting the dissensions in Portugal; after enumerating the "liberation" of the Morea from the Turkish and Egyptian troops; after deploring the continuation of war between Russia and the Ottoman Porte, and the necessity felt by the Czar to resume (contrary to an express understanding) belligerent rights in the Mediterranean; and after deprecating the proceedings of the Catholic Association of Ireland, proceeded to recommend to his faithful parliament "to take into their deliberate consideration the whole condition of Ireland, and to review the laws which impose civil disabilities on the King's Roman-catholic subjects; to consider whether the removal of these disabilities can be effected consistently with the full and permanent security of the establishments in Church and State, with the maintenance of the reformed religion as established by law, and of the rights and privileges of the clergy of the realm and of the churches committed to their care; and to enter upon the consideration with that temper and moderation which could alone ensure the successful issue of such deliberations."

The people of both countries were, to a considerable extent, really taken by surprise. Most men felt instinctively that an epoch of religious and political change was now at hand; but few really or confidently expected to see a full emancipation of the Catholics from all disabilities actually proposed by a cabinet presided over by the Duke of Wellington and Mr Peel. Nor is this at all surprising. The truth was, that, although the principal members of the cabinet had, as Mr Peel in his speech on the opening

of the session expressly stated, made up their minds to the sheer necessity of concession soon after parliament separated in 1828, yet such was the resistance they met with, that it became a measure of necessity almost as absolute to keep perfectly secret this great change in their views and opinions. However inconsistent with some other points of his character the fact may seem to be, it is quite certain that George IV. was as strongly averse to any concessions to the Catholic portion of his subjects as was his father George III.; and this is equally true of the Duke of Cumberland his brother, and equally inexplicable. We have the distinct evidence of the Earl of Eldon that it was not until the last moment that the King's consent to the measure could be extorted from him by the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel.* Could George

* The following account of the second interview between the King and Lord Eldon, as quoted in the life of that nobleman by Twiss, is very singular and characteristic of the strange insincerity of George IV.:—

"This led to his mentioning again what he had to say as to his assent. In the former interview it had been represented that, after much conversation *twice* with his ministers, or such as had come down, he had said, 'Go on;' and that upon the latter of *those two* occasions, after many hours' fatigue, and exhausted by the fatigue of conversation, he had *said*, 'Go on.' He now produced TWO PAPERS, which he represented as copies of what he had written to them, *in which he assents to their proceeding and going on with the bill;* adding certainly in each, as he read them, very strong expressions of the pain and misery the proceedings gave him. It struck me at the time that I should, if I had been in office, have felt considerable difficulty about going on after reading such expressions; but whatever might be the fair observation as to giving or not effect to these expressions, I told

IV. have found elsewhere the materials for a ministry, it is clear he would not have suffered the Duke of Wel-

his Majesty *it was impossible to maintain that his assent had not been expressed, or to cure the evils which were consequential, after the bill, in such circumstances, had been read a second time, and in the Lords' House, with a majority of* 105. This led to much conversation upon the fact that he had, as he said, been deserted by an aristocracy that supported his father—that instead of forty-five against the measure, there were twice that number of peers for it—that everything was revolutionary—everything tending to a revolution—and the peers and the aristocracy were giving way to it. They (he said more than once or twice more) supported his father, but see what they had done to *him!* I took the liberty to say that I agreed that matters were rapidly tending to revolution—that I had long thought that this measure of Catholic Emancipation was meant to be, and certainly would be, a step towards producing it—that it was avowed as such by the Radicals in 1794, '5, and '6—that many of the Catholic Association were understood to have been engaged in all the transactions of 1798—and what had they not been threatening to do if this measure were not carried, and even if it was carried? But I thought it just only to some of the peers who voted for the bill to suppose that they had been led, or misled, to believe that his Majesty had agreed and consented to it. * * * * * * *

Little more passed except occasional bursts of expression. 'What can I do? What can I now fall back upon? I am miserable—wretched. My situation is dreadful. Nobody is about me to advise with. If I do give my assent, I'll go to the baths abroad, and thence to Hanover. I'll return no more to England. I'll make no Roman-catholic peers. I will not do what this bill will enable me to do. I'll return no more. Let them get a Catholic King in Clarence'—I think he also mentioned 'Sussex.'—'The people will see that I did not wish this.'

"There were the strongest *appearances* certainly of misery. He more than once stopped my leaving him. When the time came that I was to go, he *threw his arms round my neck* and expressed great misery. I left him about twenty minutes or a quarter before five.

lington to have carried this great measure; although, in order to obtain a little momentary popularity in Ireland, he had stooped to flatter the Irish Catholics with the belief that he was personally friendly to their claims. Indeed it seems certain that, although he had actually given his consent in writing that the bills should be proceeded with, he would have retracted even his written consent, if Lord Eldon and the High Church party could have formed a ministry capable of going on under such circumstances. Nay it is affirmed that, at the eleventh hour, this hopeless attempt was absolutely made, and that the Peel and Wellington ministry were really out of office during a part of one day. All persons who could coolly reflect, however, must have seen that an anti-catholic ministry, formed under the auspices of the Duke of Cumberland, would have been at once repudiated by three-fourths of the nation, and that, after once making Emancipation a

"I certainly thought when I left him that he would express great difficulty when the bill was proposed for the royal assent (great, but which would be overcome), about giving it. I fear that it seemed to be given as matter of course."

After being aware that, before the bills were passed at all, the royal sanction in writing had been given, it is singular to find Lord Eldon expressing himself thus:—

"April 14, 1829.

"The fatal bills received the royal assent yesterday afternoon. After all I had heard in my visits, not a day's delay! God bless us, and his church!"—*Twiss's Life of Lord Eldon*, vol. iii. p. 85.

Did Lord Eldon think that the King, like some ladies, was bound to make a "decent resistance," though everybody knew he had consented beforehand?

government measure, no peril to arise out of the step to be taken could equal that of rejection. In all probability the repugnance of George IV. and his brother arose principally out of the dread they entertained that a concession here would only prove the precursor of other concessions infinitely more dangerous in their apprehensions. To attribute either to that monarch or his brother of Cumberland the feelings of dread and detestation of the Catholic form of Christianity entertained by Presbyterian and Evangelical religionists, owing to its supposed idolatry and tendency to priestly domination and arbitrary power in general, seems to be out of the question; and candour must confess that these fears, on the part of the King, were not altogether destitute of foundation. At the very moment of the bill passing, some of its most resolute supporters rejected the idea that this measure alone could be of any efficacy to quiet or to satisfy Ireland; and that the success of O'Connell gave fresh spirits to the now considerable party of Parliamentary Reformers, is undeniable. All these circumstances, however, sufficiently account for the incertitude as to the measures to be proposed, which unquestionably existed up to the very opening of parliament. From the hour when the necessity of concession was mentioned to the sovereign, up to the time of its passing the Peers in the shape of a bill, the ministers were never sure of power for a single day; and hence reserve was forced upon them as long as reserve could conceal the critical position in which they were placed.

It has been seen that the announcements of the

speech from the throne, on the memorable 5th February 1829, operated upon the nation like an electric shock. Men, instinctively as it were, drew from it two most momentous lessons. It was felt that even a minister the most resolute cannot with success oppose that upon which four-fifths of a nation have made up their minds; and it was felt that no government can pass through a continuous monetary pressure and a course of novel and enforced economy, without losing strength, and witnessing that which seemed zeal and devotion sink into cold objection, and the only half-concealed whispers of discontent and party revolt. The first of these teachings was now to be made manifest in the spectacle of a great measure carried by ministers who had through life been adverse to it, and carried, in a great degree, through the aid of men who on most other points were politically opposed to them.

Although it may easily be conceived that the intimation of the intentions of the ministers, as given by the royal speech, must have been highly obnoxious to a large and powerful portion of both Houses, no party in either House ventured to move an amendment to the address. A strong protest was uttered by the Earl of Eldon against all schemes which had for their basis the admission of Catholics into parliament; and another, still more passionate, was vented by Lord Winchilsea; but, upon the whole, the Houses received the news temperately, and waited, as it were, to feel the pulse of the public before committing themselves violently to either side of the question. The delay of

a very few days, however, emboldened each party to begin the warfare of speeches and petitions, and the battle was waged with a rancour and animosity to which parliamentary debates had been long strangers.

On the 19th of the same month the Duke of Cumberland entered the arena with a speech by no means remarkable for the soundness of its argument. It consisted merely of the repetition of a very common but very transparent fallacy, which is perpetrated by first asserting that this is "a Protestant country," and then drawing the conclusion that the government ought to be "Protestant." The sophism here lies in the improper use of the words "Protestant country." If "Protestant country" is held to mean a country the inhabitants of which are all now Protestants, or nearly all, this is not true of the British empire, which contains six or seven millions of Catholics. If it be held to mean merely that the majority are Protestants, then, in that sense, the act for Catholic Emancipation still kept the legislature "Protestant," its Catholic members being a very small minority. This speech only attracted attention as being fancied to be an embodiment of the King's real sentiments, as well as those of the utterer. As a piece of reasoning it is totally valueless. It seems, however, to have been deemed of significance sufficient to draw forth a counter-demonstration from another member of the royal family.

On the 23rd February the Duke of Clarence took the opportunity of a debate, which arose out of the presentation of some petitions, to declare his sentiments in favour of Catholic relief. The address uttered by

the royal duke on this occasion produced great effect, both directly and indirectly. He asserted that he had been for many years a friend to the complete emancipation of the Catholics, and that the noble duke now happily at the head of the government knew, and had for some time known, that such were his opinions. Whilst the King's ministers were divided upon the subject, he felt it his duty, placed as he was in relation to his Majesty, to abstain from advocating the question openly. Now that the cabinet was united on this great measure, he felt it to be equally his duty to support the government to the utmost of his power. He then affirmed that all reasonable men now saw that this healing measure was become one really of necessity. Glancing at the struggle then in progress in France, and the aggressions of Russia on Turkey, he reminded their lordships that a war might become a state necessity to-morrow; and could they venture on war with Ireland in a state of bitter discontent and long-cherished sense of undeserved wrong? (Hear, hear, hear.) He begged the House never to forget, as his professional experience would never suffer him to forget, that Catholic seamen helped to win the victories which graced the names of Duncan, St Vincent, and Nelson; and that Irish Catholic soldiers, always as brave as light-hearted, had helped to place those laurels on the brow of that noble duke—laurels the reward of a career of victory from Seringapatam to Waterloo—laurels which ought to have saved him from the infamous attacks now making upon him for this just and necessary measure. In conclusion, the royal duke

called upon the bishops to take care how they opposed this bill. Did they wish to see their country lose her influence abroad, and be exposed continually to the risk of civil war at home? For his part, he thanked God the hour had now come to heal all divisions of this sort, and to do tardy justice to a generous but deeply aggrieved country.

That this candid and straightforward exposition of the intentions and wishes of the Duke of Clarence produced a widely-spread effect amongst the peers is very certain. It confirmed the wavering, and turned the scale with the selfish. The Duke of Clarence was now heir-presumptive of a throne which he seemed likely to fill at no distant day. The King's state of health had been for a long period carefully concealed from the public; but to those who had access to the sources of information on this point it was known to be really desperate. A life of sensual self-indulgence had totally destroyed his nervous system and enfeebled his faculties; and he was known to be labouring under the complaint that had shortly before carried off his brother of York—that is to say, hydrothorax. Medical skill and constant attention might prolong life for a year or two, perhaps, but cure was out of the question. Hence to all those (no few) who prefer the worship of the rising to that of the setting sun, this declaration of the Duke of Clarence was conclusive; and it was felt that the success of the bill was now insured. The Duke of Sussex followed in the same strain; whilst the Duke of Cumberland bitterly complained of the epithet "infamous," as applied to some

of the opponents of the Duke of Wellington and his cabinet. The Duke of Clarence, however, would not retract. To any portion of his brother's conduct, he said, he of course could not dream of applying such a term; but as it bore upon some others, it must remain as it was.

In the House of Commons, the dreadfully embittered feelings of the High Church Tory party were yet more openly apparent. The Duke of Wellington was in part preserved by his great military name from the sneers and reproaches now dealt out by the opponents of the relief bill in no stinted measure; but upon the head of Mr Peel they were accumulated, and the storm without the doors of the House blew as fiercely as did the storm within. At Oxford, the course of Mr Peel was so obnoxious to his constituents that he felt it due to himself and them to resign his seat, and take the chance of a re-election. If he really hoped to have been re-elected, he had deceived himself. The feeling against him as an apostate from the cause was too strong to be stemmed. It was at first proposed to set up Lord Encombe, the son of Earl Eldon, as a candidate against Mr Peel; but he eventually being deemed too young, Sir Robert Harry Inglis was substituted, and was returned, in spite of all the efforts and influence of government, by 755 against 609, the baffled secretary taking refuge in the close borough of Westbury, which was at that time the property of Sir Manasseh Lopez. By General Gascoygne and other of the ultra-tory members of the House of Commons, the conduct of the government was severely arraigned.

It was asserted that the great majority of the people were opposed to these intended concessions; that ministers and their adherents were acting in open opposition to the sense of the nation; and that the fate which had befallen Mr Peel at Oxford was in reserve for many of his auxiliaries were parliament to be dissolved.

In the meantime, an *avalanche* of petitions for and against the claims of the Catholics loaded the table of the House; and scenes of the most violent character were enacted at the county and other public meetings all over the country. Nor would it be easy to refute the often-repeated asseveration that ministers, on this occasion, had not the majority of the people with them. They had with them those of their ordinary supporters that made a point of supporting a government to which they were accustomed to defer. They had with them also the whole of the Whig and extreme Liberal party, and a portion of the Moderate or Low Churchmen. They had also a few Liberal Dissenters—Unitarians, Quakers, and Presbyterians; and a few of the Moderate Established Clergy and Liberal Dissenting Ministers. But against them they had the majority of the old High Church Tories, a large portion of the Established Scotch Churchmen, the whole of the High Church Clergy, a portion of the Low Church or Moderate Clergymen, the whole of the Evangelical Clergy, and nearly all the Baptist and Methodist congregations with their ministers; and, in addition to all these, they had to contend against the delusions spread sedulously amongst the uneducated and credulous, who were made to believe that the

days of "bloody Mary," as she was termed, were at hand, and that fire and faggot were soon to re-appear at Smithfield.

Such was the position of parties, and such the religious ferment, when, on the 5th March 1829, Mr Secretary Peel undertook the trying task of bringing the Emancipation Bill before the Commons. Nothing could exceed the violence of the opposing parties when the nature of the bill was explained in detail. Few, even amongst the friends of administration, were prepared to find it so complete, and so untrammelled with exceptions; whilst its opponents asserted that such a bill could only be approved of by persons regardless of religion, or altogether disbelievers in it.

Despite, however, the surges of political rage, of religious passion, and of theological hatred, which perpetually broke over them, the ministers and their friends resolutely put their bark before the wind, and steered onwards. On the 5th March 1829, Mr Secretary Peel, having first moved that the portion of his Majesty's speech which related to the state of Ireland should be read by the clerk, rose to bring this *vexata questio* for the last time before the House of Commons. This trying task he went through in the course of an address which, for manliness, logical precision, and clear judgment as to matter and manner, it would be difficult to commend too much. To that more questionable quality—half poetry, half prose, but neither the one nor the other—commonly called eloquence, it had no pretensions. After an exordium, in which Mr Peel justified his change of measures as a states-

man upon the ground of a state necessity, he thus proceeded :—

" Sir, the outline of my argument is this :—We are placed in a position in which we cannot remain. We cannot continue stationary. There is an evil in divided cabinets and distracted councils which cannot be longer tolerated. This is my first position. I do not say, in the first instance, *what* we are to do in consequence. I declare merely that our present position is untenable. Supposing this to be established, and supposing it to be conceded that a united government must be formed, in the next place I say that government must choose one of two courses. They must advance or they must recede. They must grant further political privileges to the Roman-catholics, or they must retract those already given. They must remove the barriers that obstruct the continued flow of relaxation and indulgence, or they must essay to roll back to its source the mighty current which has been let in upon us, year after year, by the gradual withdrawal of restraint. I am asked what new light has broken in upon me? Why I see a necessity for concession now which was not evident before? True it is that this House of Commons did last year and for the first time recognise the principle of concession—that last year the divisions between the two Houses of Parliament were renewed. But the same events, I am told, have happened before, and therefore the same consequences ought to follow! Is this the fact? Are events in politics, like equal quantities in numbers or mathematics, always the same? Are they like the great abstract truths of morality, eternal and invariable in their application? May not the recurrence—the continued recurrence—of the very same event totally alter its character, at least its practical results? (Hear, hear, hear!) Because divisions betwixt the Lords and Commons may be tolerated for five years, or for ten years, must they therefore be tolerable for ever?

" So far as my own course in this question is concerned, it

is the same with that which suggested itself to my mind in 1825, when I was his majesty's principal minister for the home department, and when I found myself in a minority of this House upon this question. When I saw the numbers arrayed against me, I felt that, as a minister, my position was no longer tenable. The moment, sir, that I, the minister responsible for the government of Ireland, found that I was left in a minority on the question which was of paramount interest and importance to that country, that moment I sought to be relieved from the duties and responsibility of office. I stated to the Earl of Liverpool, who was then at the head of the administration, that, in consequence of the decision given against me in this House, it was my anxious wish to be relieved from office. It was, however, notified to me that my retirement would cause the retirement of the Earl of Liverpool; that such an event would at once produce a dissolution of the ministry, and that the responsibility would rest with me. (Hear, hear, hear.) I hold in my hand, sir, the necessary proof of this assertion. (Hear, hear.) I could wish to be spared the necessity of using it, but I am ready to produce it to any one who may wish to see it.

"But to proceed. Sir, I was told that the consequence of my retirement would be the immediate dissolution of the government of Lord Liverpool, who was then approaching the close of his career. I had entered public life under his auspices, and I shrank from the painful task of causing his retirement and the dissolution of his majesty's existing government. If I had acted simply in obedience to my own wishes, I should have resigned. I was, however, induced to retain office, and to try the result of another appeal to the country by a general election. In 1826 there was a new parliament. In 1827 a majority of this House decided against the Catholic question. In 1828, however, the same House took a different view of the matter; and, though it did not pass a bill, it agreed to a resolution favourable to an adjustment. That

resolution having been passed, I was again in the situation in which I had been put in 1825, and again I determined to retire from office. I intimated my fixed intention in this respect to the Duke of Wellington; but I felt it my duty to accompany that intimation by the declaration, not only that I would not in my private capacity any longer obstruct a settlement that now seemed inevitable, but that I should advise and promote it. (Hear, hear.) Circumstances, however, occurred (as I have already explained) under which I was again appealed to to remain in office, and under which I was assured that my retirement must prevent the adoption of the course which I was disposed to recommend. I resolved therefore, and without doubt or hesitation, not to abandon my post, but to take all the personal consequences of originating and enforcing as a minister the very measure which I have heretofore opposed.

"I was now called upon to make those sacrifices of private feeling which are inseparable from apparent inconsistency of conduct—from the abandonment of preconceived opinions—from the alienation of those with whom I had heretofore co-operated. Sir, I have done so; and the events of the last six weeks must have proved that it is painful in the extreme to prefer to such considerations even the most urgent sense of public duty.

> "'Tis said with ease—but oh! how hardly tried
> By haughty souls, to human honour tied—
> Oh! sharp, convulsive pangs of agonizing pride.'"

"——— Sir, I return to objects of more public concern. I detailed on the former occasion that a dreadful commotion had distracted the public mind in Ireland; that a feverish agitation and unnatural excitement prevailed to a degree scarcely credible throughout the entire country. I attempted to show that social intercourse was poisoned there in its very springs; that family was divided against family, and man

against his neighbour; that, in a word, the bonds of civilized life were almost dissevered, that the fountains of public justice were corrupted, that the spirit of discord walked openly abroad, and that an army of physical force was marshalled in defiance of all law, and to the imminent danger of the public peace. I ask, sir, could this state of things be suffered to exist? and, if not, what course were we to pursue? Perhaps I shall be told, as I was on a former occasion, in forcible though familiar language, 'This is the old story! That all this has been so for the last twenty years, and that therefore there is no reason for a change.' Why, sir, this is the very reason for the change. (Hear, hear, hear.) It is *because* the evil is not casual and temporary, but permanent and inveterate; it is because the detail of the misery and outrage is nothing but 'the old story,' that I am contented to run the hazard of change. We cannot, sir, determine upon remaining idle spectators of the discord and anarchy of Ireland. The universal voice of the country declares that 'something' must be done. I am but echoing the sentiments of all reasonable men when I repeat that something must be done. I wish, however, to take nothing for granted, but to found my argument, not upon a general assent, but upon unquestionable fact. I ask you to examine the state of his majesty's government for the last thirty-five years, and to remark the bearing of the Catholic question upon that government, to note the divisions it has created amongst our statesmen, the distraction it has occasioned in our councils, and the weakness it has consequently produced. I ask you then to observe what has been the course of parliament for the same period; and I ask you to note what has been the consequence—the practical consequence to Ireland—of these divisions in the king's councils, and disunion betwixt the two Houses of Parliament."

Mr Peel then proceeded to prove that, from the era of 1794, when Mr Pitt found it necessary to be asso-

ciated with Lord Fitzwilliam, Mr Wyndham, and the Duke of Portland, all Whigs, but all opposed to the French Revolution of 1789; and when Lord Fitzwilliam became Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, distraction, caused by this question and Lord Fitzwilliam's openly favouring the Irish Catholics, has constantly infested the council-board. Lord Fitzwilliam was soon recalled; but the spirit of Catholic resistance to coercion, once evoked, could not again be laid. French emissaries stirred up the embers of discontent in Ireland. The Presbyterians of Ulster became partly alienated; and after the miscarriage of more than one French expedition, the rebellion of 1798 burst forth, to be quenched in blood and ashes. Mr Pitt now felt the necessity of the Union. Ireland was getting too unruly and too strong to be trusted with an independent Parliament; and in 1800 the Union was carried,—Mr Peel, in the course of his speech, distinctly admitting, for the first time, that Mr Pitt, as an inducement to that measure, had pledged himself to concession of the Catholic claims. King George the Third, however, unable or unwilling to see that he took the coronation oath in his public and not private capacity, and that in its interpretation he must be guided by his councillors, precisely as in all other political measures, refused his assent after the first part of the bargain was completed; and Mr Pitt, in disgust, resigned. In 1804, Mr Pitt was again minister; and up to his death the cabinet was divided upon this question. Mr Perceval succeeded, and his government was distracted by the same divisions, Castlereagh and

Canning advocating concession, whilst the Prime Minister opposed it. After the death of Mr Perceval, it became "a neutral question;" that is to say, each member of the cabinet took his own course with respect to it, and thus a constant appearance of debility and disunion was created. Mr Peel then showed that the same inconsistency was created in Parliament. From 1807 up to 1829, there were five new Houses of Commons; and of these five, four had decided to consider the question; whilst the Peers, in every instance, refused to entertain it. Here was the spectacle of a constant collision between the Upper and Lower House on the most exciting of all descriptions of debates; that is to say, those involving religious feelings. Leaving this portion of his argument, the Secretary then, by reference to individual votes, proved that the more populous counties and towns, as far as the votes of their members were a proof, were favourable to concession.

Having exhausted this branch of his argument, Mr Peel next described the state of Ireland, and not only affirmed, but demonstrated, that from 1800 to 1829 Ireland had hardly been governed during a single year by the ordinary laws of the realm. His statements, put into a tabular form, give the following results:—

1800 } Habeas Corpus suspended. Act to suppress rebellion in
1801 } force.
1802
1803 } Emmett's insurrection. Habeas Corpus suspended.
1804 } Acts to suppress rebellion revived.
1805
1806 Insubordination in the south of Ireland, and more police.

1807, 1808 } Insurrection Act, and military law in proclaimed districts.
1809, 1810 } Insurrection Act still in force.
1811
1812
1813
1814, 1815, 1816, 1817 } The Insurrection Act renewed, and most part of the south of Ireland under military law.
1818
1819
1820
1821
1822, 1823, 1824 } Insurrection Act renewed and in force.
1825, 1826 } Act to suppress dangerous associations.
1827, 1828 } Act against treasonable associations.
1829 Emancipation Act.

Thus, out of thirty years, eight only in Ireland have passed without extraordinary powers being called for. Mr Peel then went forward thus:—

"Shall this state of things continue without some decisive effort at a remedy? Can we, sir, remain as we are? Have I not established the first step in my argument that our present position is *not* tenable? that the system of neutral governments and of open questions ought to be, and must be, abandoned; and that there is no safety except in united councils and joint responsibility of the king's ministers.

"This being admitted, it remains to be determined on what principle shall those councils be united, and for what objects shall that responsibility be incurred? The choice lies between permanent, unqualified resistance to concession on the one side, and the settlement of the Catholic question on the other. There is no intermediate line to be discovered—there is no

useful purpose to be promoted—either by a resistance rested upon merely temporary grounds of expediency, or by the hesitating grant of a few additional privileges to the Roman-catholics. By the first course you concede the principle of resistance. By the second, you give new power without giving satisfaction. The main question, however, is this—Can a government be formed, capable of conducting with vigour and success the general administration of the affairs of this country, upon the principle of permanent and decisive opposition to further concession? I will not, sir, take it for granted that it cannot. The question involves considerations most important to my argument; because if it be answered (as I think it must be) in the negative, I establish at once my own justification and the necessity of an immediate settlement of the question. Can then a government be formed, united on the principle of permanent exclusion? It may perhaps be formed; and it may perhaps determine to resist the claims of the Catholics; but—How will it govern Ireland? Questions much more difficult will occur than in what mode a motion in the House of Commons can be best debated or resisted. To come at once to the point—What is to be done with the Catholic Association? 'Suppress it!' is the ready answer. But by what means? The existing law affords no effectual means of suppression; at least such is the deliberate and unanimous opinion of the law-officers of England and Ireland. They have all deprecated prosecution, either under the common-law, or under the Convention Act of 1793."

Having shown that these difficulties, arising out of associations formed by the discontented Catholic population of Ireland had recurred, at various periods, again and again, as far back as 1793, the right honourable Secretary proceeded to review the relative numbers of Catholics and Protestants in the respective

Irish provinces. The general estimate, as quoted by Mr Peel, was the following:—

	Whole Population.	Catholic.	Protestant.
Ulster.....	1,993,494	800,000	1,200,000
Leinster.....	1,757,492	1,380,000	377,000
Munster.....	1,935,612	1,735,600	200,000
Connaught.....	1,100,229	930,000	171,000

The right honourable gentleman then giving instances of the disproportion between the two religions in various counties, districts, and parishes in Ireland, proceeded thus:—

"These circumstances being duly considered, again I ask, *how* is the civil and criminal process of the law to be equally or regularly conducted over Ireland? I say *how*, supposing the withdrawal of the powers and privileges already granted to the Catholics to have the effect I anticipate,—a complete dividing of the population into two distinct classes; one favoured by the law, and one totally estranged from it? It may indeed be said, and truly said, that reliance can be placed upon the army and the police; but will England patiently bear the enormous expense of enforcing every civil right of property, of supporting every legal claim for rent or tithe, by the agency of such expensive instruments? And yet there will be, at least in many districts, no alternative.

"These, sir, are practical and certain, and I fear incurable evils, which we must determine to endure, if we resolve to retrace our steps. But are there no contingent misfortunes upon the occurrence of which, and upon the issue of which, if they do occur, a prudent government must calculate? What will be the result of civil insurrection? What will be that of foreign

war? Will this system of continued exclusion, or I should rather say of deprivation and coercion, be proof against such calamities? If it be not, is it wise to adopt it? We have had, in the recent history of Ireland, experience of the effect of both these calamities; experience of the practical bearing of each on the Catholic claims. Take the example of foreign war. In the year 1792, bold hearts and able heads presided over the councils of this country. There was no disposition to yield to the Catholic claims; no lack of Protestant feeling in the country, to make resistance effectual. In 1792, the Catholics petitioned for partial relief. The grand juries of Ireland were nearly unanimous against concession. Nay, the Irish House of Commons not only refused relief, but also by an immense majority rejected the petition which prayed for it; and refused permission for it even to be laid upon their table. The vote upon that motion was taken, and 208 members voted for the rejection of that petition;—twenty-three only voting against it.

"But in 1793 broke out the revolutionary war with France; and in 1793 the session of the Irish Parliament opened with a recommendation from the crown to consider the condition of the Roman-catholics, and to repeal some of the disabling laws. Mr Pitt was at the head of the government, and Mr Dundas the Secretary of State, in correspondence with Ireland; and at their pressing instance was this recommendation given. What was the consequence? The hasty grant of that power to the multitude, and physical strength of the country which was conferred by the unrestricted admission to the elective franchise. Let us profit, then, by the example of the past, and not be too confident that stern resolutions formed in the time of peace can be rigidly maintained under the pressure of foreign war."

After further references of the same kind, the right honourable gentleman then proceeded to describe the provisions of the bill about to be introduced, which he did at great length and with much minuteness, dwell-

ing especially on the necessity of extinguishing the forty-shilling freeholders in Ireland, whom he described as men sure either to be influenced on one side by the landlord, or on the other by the priest. With regard to the coronation oath, he treated the objections of George III. and George IV. as being entirely baseless and mistaken; and quoted the recorded opinions of Mr Pitt, Lord Kenyon, and Lord Liverpool, that the oath did not, in the slightest degree, stand in the way of any measure that ministers might advise as not incompatible with, but, on the contrary, really advantageous to the position and well-being of the established form of Christianity. The right honourable gentleman then, having exhausted every view of the subject, made the following certainly appropriate conclusion:—

"I well know, sir, that, instead of acting as I have done, I might have taken a course more popular perhaps, and certainly more selfish. I might have held language much more acceptable to the friends with whom I have long acted, and to the constituents whom I have lately lost. 'His ego gratiora dictû alia esse scio; sed me vera pro gratis loqui et si meum ingenium non moneret, necessitas cogit. Vellem equidem vobis placere; sed multo malo vos salvos esse, qualicunque ergo me animo futuri estis.' In the course I have taken I have been mainly influenced by the anxious desire to provide for the maintenance of Protestant interests, and for the security of Protestant establishments. This is my defence. This is my consolation. This shall be my revenge.

"Sir, I will hope for the best. God grant that the moral storm may be appeased; that the turbid waters of strife may be settled and composed; and that, having found their just level,

they may be mingled with equal flow in one clear and common stream. But if these expectations were to be disappointed; if, unhappily, civil strife and contention shall survive the restoration of political privilege; if there really be something inherent in the spirit of the Roman-catholic religion which disdains equality, and will be contented with nothing but ascendency; still am I contented to run the hazard of the change. The contest—if it be inevitable—will be fought for other objects and with other arms. The struggle, sir, will then be—not for the abolition of civil distinctions, but for the predominance of an intolerant religion.

"Sir, I contemplate the progress of that struggle with pain; but I look forward to its issue with pefect composure and confidence. We shall have dissolved the great moral alliance that has hitherto given strength to the cause of the Roman-catholics. We shall range on our side the illustrious authorities which have heretofore been enlisted upon theirs. The rallying cry of 'civil liberty' will then be all our own. We shall enter the field with the full assurance of victory; armed with the consciousness of having done justice, and of being in the right; backed by the unanimous feeling of England,—by the firm union of orthodoxy and dissent,—by the applauding voice of Scotland; and, if other aid be requisite, cheered by the sympathies of every free state in either hemisphere, and by the wishes and prayers of every good man and every free man, in whatever clime, or under whatever form of government his lot may have been cast."—*Hansard's Debates, New Series*, vol. xx. p. 780.

It seems admitted on all sides that the impression produced by this speech upon the House and the country was very decisive. It occupied four hours in the delivery, was listened to with an eager attention that never flagged for a moment, and was concluded amidst

cheers so loud and redoubled, that their echoes were distinctly heard in Westminster Hall. Without embodying, or attempting to embody much of that quality properly called "eloquence," it yet contains more than one fine illustration. When Mr Peel, dwelling upon the insanity of the idea of any re-enactment of penal laws on account of religious notions, and upon the consequent impossibility of long retaining the remains that were left, said, "We cannot replace the Roman-catholics in the position in which we found them when the system of relaxation and indulgence began. We have given them the opportunities of acquiring education, wealth, and power. We have removed with our hands the seal from the vessel in which a mighty spirit was enclosed; but it will not, like the genius in the fable, return within its narrow confines to gratify our curiosity, and to enable us to cast it back into the obscurity from which we evoked it," he unquestionably gave utterance to one of the most beautiful and complete as well as one of the most original illustrations ever employed. This, however, was a solitary and accidental flash, and not one of a series of corruscations, such as those which Burke used to exhibit.

As an address adapted to a great purpose, Mr Peel's speech on this occasion nevertheless abounds in qualities more valuable, because more practically and permanently efficient than any eloquence can be. Logical in its conduct, clear in its statements, and comprehensive in its details, it persuades and convinces the reason, and not the passions, and effects its purpose without the questionable aid of adventitious excite-

ment or meretricious ornament. As a matter of display, it has no rivalship with the more splendid effusions of Burke, Sheridan, or Canning; but as a matter of business, as a practical means adapted to a practical purpose, it is itself almost unrivalled. From abstraction and generalities it is totally free. Mr Peel's peculiar position as a statesman, as well as the bent of his opinions and temperament, precluded him from flights of fancy on the beauty of toleration, or from that affectation of refined philosophy which makes light of theological differences, and would treat the aspirations of sacerdotal ambition as if they were mere casuistical polemics—questions for the schools, and unworthy the attention of either the statesman or the legislator. Hence every sentence uttered by the speaker is immediately applicable to the question before him, and tends to promote the object which he has in view. Ornament is given up for the sake of concentration of reasoning; and if the fancy is left untouched, the understanding is more surely captivated. It is certain that this masterly piece of special pleading—for such the right honourable Secretary's address undoubtedly is—must always rank as one of his greatest oratorical efforts. As a display of logical art, it is very fine; and when the torrent of obloquy and ribaldry with which the speaker was constantly assailed is remembered, the entire calmness, self-possession, and courtesy which characterize it, are surprising.

The debates which followed were little more than a repetition of the hackneyed arguments by which the continuance of the Catholic disabilities had long been

supported. To use the homely phrase of Sir Francis Burdett, the grain had long been thrashed out, and little more than chaff remained. The only novelty was the speech of Mr Michael Thomas Sadler, a man of talent, but a nominee of the Duke of Newcastle, against the second reading of the bill. Mr Sadler argued that the distractions of Ireland, which, as he truly said, existed before the Protestant Reformation, were not to be ascribed to the Catholic disabilities, the removal of which, he said, would be found useless as a remedy. The causes of Irish disaffection, Mr Sadler told the House, lay much deeper. They were the results, he asserted, of centuries of harshness and cruelty, during which Ireland was treated, not as a part of the empire, but as a conquered country, the miserable inhabitants of which were to be subjected to the cupidity, the brutality, and the caprice of the victors. Hence it became a part of the system of these victors to goad the Irish chieftains into perpetual insurrections, in order to profit by the forfeiture of their lands, which thus passed to foreign masters, who felt nothing but contempt or hatred for those who inhabited them, who ground them down by means of intermediate taskmasters in the shape of agents and middlemen, and who left them to perish as the beasts of the field perish when they become unable to seek their own food. This treatment, argued Mr Sadler, and not the mere difference of religious creeds, has sown beggary, disaffection, and violence broad-cast over the land; and the cure must reside in kind and resident landlords, in a liberal poor-law, in the en-

couragement of trade and manufactures, and in the impartial administration of justice between man and man, whether Celt or Saxon. That this unhesitating disclosure of great national crime made a profound impression on those who heard it is undeniable; and many members, such as Mr Hume and Sir Francis Burdett, who were amongst the most active friends of emancipation, unquestionably went as far as Mr Sadler in these opinions. The inconsistency was in the total denial of any irritation caused by the disabling laws and the refusal, on the part of Mr Sadler, to remove them, as the first step to a better and more just system of rule in Ireland; and this totally marred the effect of an address, otherwise of great power and deep insight into the causes of national evil. The tendency of the greater part of it was, in truth, a recommendation to emancipate as the first step towards a better state of things: the end was a condemnation of that first step as a fatal innovation—a lame conclusion certainly to an argument, the *gist* of which was to show the necessity of innovation of some sort.

The speech of the Attorney-General, Sir Charles Wetherell, exceedingly honest and commendable in substance, was, in point of taste, not to be commended. Sir Charles had been all along one of the most zealous opponents of Catholic progress, and, much to his credit, he resolutely refused to support the ministry who had made him attorney-general in their change of tactics, and declined to have any hand in the draft of the bill which the Secretary for Home Affairs was to bring before the House of Commons. In this conduct of

their Attorney-General, the ministers very honourably acquiesced; and, had Sir Charles contented himself with proving that William the Third never meant to conciliate Catholics, and that, therefore, a century and a-half afterwards, the same course must be pursued, all would have been right. But the eccentric official was not satisfied with an opposition in this mitigated fashion, and the consequence was, that the House laughed at numerous passages of a speech which, had they not treated thus lightly, they would have had no option but to treat severely. When Sir Charles, not appeased by opposing the bill, designated it "as atrocious" and "jacobinical;" asserted that those who framed it "did not understand the legal tendency of one of its clauses;" and wound up by saying that, if the king "chose to violate his coronation oath," he, as attorney-general, "would not violate his by assisting to endanger his Majesty" by causing him to commit perjury; everybody felt that he who uttered such accusations ought first to have severed all connexion with the government of which he was still a servant.

Mr Peel's motion, which was for the House to go into committee to consider of the propriety of discussing the Catholic claims, with a view to the repeal of the disabling laws, was carried by a majority of 188,—the ayes being 348, the noes 160. The third reading of the bill was carried by a majority of 178, —the ayes being 320, the noes 142. In the House of Peers, where the opposition was much stronger, and where many of the peers held estates in Ireland,

which they conceived would be ultimately endangered by concession, the proceedings were more acrimonious and violent than in the lower House. Such, indeed, was the degree of passion in which some of the Peers indulged, that, amongst other consequences, it led to the absurd exhibition of a duel with pistols between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Winchilsea, whose intellect, it is only charity to conclude, was somewhat, on this occasion, warped by the extreme effervescence of his feelings. How the Prime Minister could be induced so completely to abandon the usual strong good sense of his character as to risk a life, then public property, in a rencontre so childish, it is difficult to conceive. Whatever opinions may be held as to the admissibility of duelling in private life, there cannot be a more obviously clear rule than that which forbids public men from coming into personal collision with intemperate or malignant opponents of the public measures which they advocate, in consequence of any dissensions arising out of such advocacy. To affirm the contrary would be simply preposterous; for to do so would be to assert that it is incumbent upon every public man to stand to be shot at by all who may gratify either passion or interest by such an act. In the Duke of Wellington's case, the motive of the act is more incomprehensible than it would have been in that of any other man,—it being nearly impossible to conceive that he, the commander in so many campaigns, could fancy his character for personal courage compromised by passing over an intemperate letter, and omitting to bear a part in an

exhibition at once so reprehensible and so ridiculous. Yet, were this not the Duke's motive, upon what other imaginable motive could he have acted? In spite of a very determined and sometimes intemperately conducted opposition, however, the second reading of the Relief Bill was carried by a majority of 105, including proxies,—217 peers voting for the second reading, and 112 against it. The third reading was carried by a majority of only one less.

There were two or three circumstances connected with these memorable debates which ought not to be passed over unnoticed. One was, that Mr Peel, during the debate on the second reading of the relief bill in the Commons, took occasion solemnly to deny that he had any share in that concealed persecution to which the premature death of Mr Canning was commonly attributed, though whether rightly or not it is impossible to say. The expressions of the right honourable Secretary were these:—

"I will not conceal from the House that, in the course of this debate, allusions have been made to the memory of my right honourable friend (Mr Canning) which have been most painful to my feelings. An honourable baronet has spoken of the cruel manner in which my right honourable friend was '*hunted down.*' Whether the honourable baronet was one of those who 'hunted him down,' I know not; but this I do know, that whoever did join in the inhuman cry which was raised against him, *I was not one.* I was on terms *of the most friendly intimacy* with my right honourable friend, *down even to the day of his death;* and I say, with as much sincerity of heart as man can speak, that I wish he were now alive to reap that harvest which he sowed, and to enjoy the triumph which

his exertions gained. I would say of him, as he said of the late Mr Perceval, 'would he were here to enjoy the fruits of his victory!'

'Tuque tuis armis, nos te poteremur, Achille.'"

Another phenomenon was, that whatever might be the extent of passionate vehemence and violence of feeling within the walls of the Houses of Parliament, the vindictive extent of which eventually broke up and ruined the great Tory party, there was quite equal violence out of doors. The stigma of deism, or of indifference to all religion, was fixed upon every man not a Catholic who dared to believe that no benefit either to religion or its votaries could result from disabilities or distinctions on account of modes of faith; and the emancipation bill was declared by its opponents to be the diabolical fruit of a union betwixt the two evil spirits of popery and infidelity. Another peculiarity of this conflict of opinion was the employment of large meetings in the open air, in order that all classes of the population might take their share in the decision. Amongst other displays of this kind, an enormous multitude of persons met on Penenden Heath, over whom the sheriff of the county presided, and which was composed of men of every grade and every rank, whether of political opinion or social station, as will readily be admitted when we find amongst the speakers at this monster gathering the names of the Earl of Winchilsea, Mr Shiel, and Mr Cobbett. This example, once set, was sure to be followed. No one now denied the legality of such meetings when summoned for a legal purpose, that of petitioning the

legislature or the throne, and when unarmed and held in open daylight, with the sanction, active or passive, of the local authorities; and from these meetings may be said to have taken their rise those organized multitudes who, in the years 1831 and 1832, under the auspices of the political unions, supported Earl Grey's ministry through the arduous and perilous crisis of the Reform Bill.

The session of 1829 was, of course, nearly occupied by the lengthened debates which were the necessary precursors of the emancipation of the Catholics; but the administration had other difficulties with which to contend—difficulties which, though less prominent, were in their nature less surmountable. The popularity in Ireland, which they deserved and ought now to have enjoyed, was, by an unfortunate combination of circumstances, damaged and stained as soon almost as it was won. By the Emancipation Act a form of oath, instead of the oath of supremacy, which was before tendered to all members of parliament, was provided for such Catholic members as should, from and after the passing of the act, be elected to serve in parliament, as well as for such Catholic peers as should proceed to take their seats in the House of Lords. Unluckily, however, in the opinion of the law-officers of the crown, Mr O'Connell was excepted from the operation of the act. As worded, it had no retrospective effect; and as Mr O'Connell was elected member for Clare previously to the bill being even brought before the legislature, it was held by the crown-lawyers that he remained subject to the law as it then

stood; and that, if he entered the House, the oath of supremacy (which, of course, he could not take) must be tendered to him. When this opinion on the part of the Attorney and Solicitor General was communicated to Mr O'Connell, he claimed to be heard against it, and was heard accordingly at great length at the bar of the House. The House, however, governed by the opinions of the law-officers, decided that O'Connell could not sit, unless re-elected, without taking the oath according to the former law; and a new writ for Clare being ordered, he was elected without opposition. By the excitable Irish, however, this strange occurrence, probably unforeseen by the framers of the Emancipation Act, was construed into a studied insult to "the Liberator," as he now was styled; and to Mr Peel's personal animosity it was universally ascribed. Whether Mr O'Connell himself really viewed it in this light, it is impossible to say; but, be that as it might, it gave him colourable pretext for the renewal of that agitation in which he lived, moved, and had his being. He revived the Catholic Association under a new name; and, flushed by victory, was rash enough to broach that wild project, upon which he was ultimately wrecked, the repeal of the Union.

Whilst domestic feud was thus rekindled by the restless nature of O'Connell, a cloud of troubles abroad still continued to portend some future storm. Russia, ever prompt to take advantage of the difficulties of other nations, was now about to strike another fatal blow at the independence of the Ottoman Porte. This cunning government was well aware of all the

obstacles preventing an energetic rule in Great Britain and in France. The Russian cabinet saw that commercial misfortune and another galling monetary pinch, caused by the second withdrawal of the smaller paper currency, were daily creating more and more discontent with the measures of the Duke of Wellington and Mr Peel. They were aware that, so far from being in a condition to interfere by force of arms between Russia and her victim the Sultan, the Duke was bent upon giving ease if possible to the nation by a rigid and searching economy; and that this, whilst it failed to relieve the country, was adding to the ministerial weakness by disgusting the mercenary portion of their partisans. The Russian cabinet also perceived that Catholic Emancipation would prove no panacea to quiet Irish discontent, and that, under its provisions, hardly a Catholic member would be sent into the House of Commons not hostile to the ministry. It was also known to them that the measure of Catholic relief, whilst it failed in attaching the Catholics to the Tory party, had caused an irreparable schism in that party, which was apparent in the course now taken by the Marquis of Blandford, who, declaring that the House of Commons was no representation of opinion in England, joined the parliamentary reformers, and moved resolutions for remodelling the Lower House.

In France the Russians beheld the same paralysis of all the powers of government. The Lower Chamber was now in constant collision with the royalist ministry, to whom the weak Charles the Tenth was committing

his fortunes and those of his family; and it was becoming palpable to all men capable of political foresight that a violent explosion could not long be delayed. Secure, thus, from all efficient interference either on the part of England or France, Russia was now, in spite of all the remonstrances of the British cabinet, carrying on a war against her victim, by sea as well as by land; blockading his ports both in the Euxine and Mediterranean, and besieging his fortresses on the line of the Danube; contemptuously regardless of the interruption and injury thus caused to the commerce of Great Britain and other maritime nations, friends of Turkey.

Austria, dreading the aggressive ambition of the Russian autocrat, but dreading yet more the consequences of another democratic explosion in France and Italy, and hopeless of efficient support from England, stood still, anxiously watching without interrupting the military operations of the Muscovite; and, even whilst the British parliament was yet sitting, it became evident that the Ottoman empire was on the eve of partition by Russia, unless Russia could be awed into some show of moderation.

These sinister prognostications were speedily fulfilled. Before the summer of 1829 was at an end, the Russian general, Count Diebitsch, had out-generalled the Vizier, by whom he was opposed; had crossed the ridge of the Balkan, had dispersed the last Turkish army at Selimno, and taken Adrianople, and was now preparing to march upon Constantinople, which the rout at Selimno placed at his mercy. Austria, at this time

under the firm rule of Prince Metternich, who saw with deep uneasiness the ambitious schemes of the Czar Nicholas at this juncture, became greatly alarmed. It was always in her power, by decision, to check the advance of the Russian invaders; and this, eagerly aided by the influence both of France and England, she instantly did, and thus prevented the actual occupation of Constantinople by the troops of Russia.

The result was the convention of Akerman and the treaty of Adrianople, by which, despite the intervention of the western powers, the Sultan was subjected to conditions so degrading that the Czar really divided his empire with him, and an *imperium in imperio* was established at Constantinople, under the *surveillance* of a Russian ambassador. From that moment, Turkey in Europe was a fief of the Czar rather than of the Sultan; who, deprived of the respect of his subjects, was afterwards only saved from being dethroned by his own vassal, Mehemet Ali, the Pacha of Egypt, after the rout at Koniah, by the opposition of a Russian protecting army, encamped within sight of the dome of St. Sophia.*

* The following articles of the treaty signed after the occupation of Adrianople, it will be seen, erect a Russian government for Russians at Constantinople, and banish the Turks entirely from the soil of Wallachia and Moldavia:—

"Article 7. Russian subjects shall enjoy, throughout the whole extent of the Ottoman empire, as well by land as by sea, the full and entire liberty of commerce secured to them by the former treaties concluded between the two high contracting parties. No infringement of that liberty of commerce shall be permitted, neither shall it be permitted to be checked in any case, nor under any pre-

Whilst Turkey in Europe was thus reduced almost to a virtual dependency of Russia, affairs in France were rapidly assuming an aspect not much more satis-

tence, by a prohibition or any restriction whatever, nor in consequence of any regulation or measure, whether it be one of internal administration or one of internal legislation. Russian subjects, vessels, and merchandise, shall be secure against all violence and all chicanery. *The former shall live under the exclusive jurisdiction and police of the ministers and the consuls of Russia.* The Russian vessels shall not be subjected to *any visit on board whatever* of the Ottoman authorities, neither out at sea nor in any of the ports or roadsteads belonging to the dominions of the Sublime Porte; and all merchandise and commodities belonging to a Russian subject, *after having paid the custom-house duties required by the tariffs*, shall be freely conveyed, deposited on land in the warehouses of the proprietor or of his consignee, or else tranferred to the vessels of any other nation whatever, *without the Russian subjects being required to give notice to the local authorities*, and still less to ask their permission. It is expressly agreed upon that all grain proceeding from Russia shall enjoy the same privileges, and that its free transit shall never experience, under any pretence, any difficulty or impediment. The Sublime Porte engages, besides, to watch carefully that the commerce and navigation of the Black Sea shall not experience the slightest obstruction of any nature whatever. For this purpose the Sublime Porte recognises and declares the passage of the canal of Constantinople and the strait of the Dardanelles entirely free and open to Russian ships under merchant flags, laden or in ballast, whether they come from the Black Sea to go into the Mediterranean, or whether, returning from the Mediterranean, they wish to re-enter the Black Sea. These vessels, provided they be merchantmen, of whatever size or tonnage, shall not be exposed to any impediment or vexation whatsoever, as it has been stipulated above. The two courts shall come to an understanding with respect to the best means for preventing all delay in the delivery of the necessary clearances. In virtue of the same principle, the passage of the canal of Constantinople and of the strait of the Dardanelles is declared free

factory to the friends of order and rational government. M. de Polignac had now obtained a complete sway over the mind of his weak and wavering sove-

and open for all the merchant-vessels of the powers at peace with the Sublime Porte, whether bound to the *Russian ports* of the Black Sea or returning from them,—whether laden or in ballast,—upon the same conditions as those stipulated for vessels under the Russian flag. In fine, the Sublime Porte, acknowledging the right of the Imperial Court of Russia to obtain guarantee of this full liberty of commerce and navigation in the Black Sea, solemnly declares that she will never, under any pretence whatever, throw the least obstacle in its way. She promises, above all, never to permit herself in future to stop or detain vessels, laden or in ballast, whether Russian or belonging to nations with which the Ottoman Empire shall not be in a state of declared war, passing through the strait of Constantinople and the strait of the Dardanelles, to repair from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean or from the Mediterranean to the *Russian ports of the Black Sea.* And if (which God forbid!) any of the stipulations contained in the present article shall be infringed, and the reclamation of the Russian minister on that subject shall not obtain a full and prompt satisfaction, the Sublime Porte recognises beforehand the right of the Imperial Court of Russia to consider such an infraction an act of hostility, and immediately to retaliate on the Ottoman Empire."

(*Extract from the separate Act relating to the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.*)

"To provide the more securely for the inviolability of the Moldavian and Wallachian territory, the Sublime Porte engages to retain no fortified point upon the left bank of the Danube, nor to permit any settlement there of its *Mahometan* subjects. It is accordingly irrevocably fixed that *no Mahometan* shall ever be allowed to have his residence in Moldavia or Wallachia; and that only merchants, provided with firmans, shall be admitted, for the purpose of buying, on their own account, such articles as may be required for the consumption of Constantinople.

reign Charles X.; and, as a consequence of that influence, he was removed from his post of ambassador at the British Court, and recalled to take part of the government of France, when he was made President of the Council, M. de la Bourdonnaye, a man if possible of more extreme principles and less political prudence, being driven out to make room for him.

In De Polignac, France had found a minister of a character the most perilous of all for a possessor of power and for the nation which he is to rule. M. de Polignac was, to a great extent, an honest visionary, with just talent enough and energy enough to precipitate him into blunders, but destitute of the courage and decision which sometimes enable men to redeem their political mistakes. He was, in fact, a sincere partisan, —a dangerous quality in a ruler whose principles and feelings are opposed to four-fifths of the nation whose affairs he is to administer. With De Polignac absolute monarchy and a privileged nobility were something sacred. In his eyes, to doubt the divine rights of either was a heresy; and with such men, a political heresy is worse than a theological schism. Hence all persons concerned in the revolution were by him accounted only malefactors, who were for the moment

The Turkish cities situated on the left bank of the Danube are to be restored to Wallachia, to remain incorporated with that principality, and the fortifications previously existing on that bank are never to be repaired. *Mahometans* possessing landed property either in those cities or upon any point left of the Danube, provided they have not unfairly become possessed thereof (*non usurpés sur des particuliers*), shall be *bound to sell such property to natives* within eighteen months."

too numerous to be condignly punished; and every institution that had arisen out of the *débâcle* of 1789, he viewed merely as the unnatural fruit of dreadful and unnatural crime. In short, had M. de Polignac possessed the power, he would have rebuilt the *bastille*, renewed the *lettres de cachet*, and revived the *gabelle* and *corvées*, without a doubt crossing his mind as to the justice or advisedness of that which he was doing. From the moment, therefore, of this unlucky favourite's attainment of power, all considerate men were convinced that quiet in France could not long endure.

From that time until the catastrophe occurred which was sure to follow, the national mind of France, naturally excitable, was irritated by a continuous series of conflicts between the constitutional party in and out of the chambers, the press, and the ministry, in which the government, unpopular as it was, perpetually succumbed. These defeats, however, instead of being lessons, were only provocations to the royalists and the *parti prêtre*, who made no longer any secret of their intentions, but openly said that, "if they could obtain majorities, they would rule by means of majorities; but if not, then they would rule without them." That all this was well known to the British ministry, cannot be doubted. That there existed here persons shortsighted enough to urge on these insane proceedings, seems equally certain; but it would be a libel upon the good sense both of the Premier and the Home Secretary not to suppose that they deprecated this suicidal violence, and anticipated the

consequences. Indeed their conduct, in instantly recognising the Provisional Government of July 1830, proved that they, at all events, were fully prepared for the crisis. To prudent counsels, however, Charles the Tenth and his ministers were alike inaccessible; and they were now busied, in hope of making themselves popular with the military, in fomenting an ancient grudge with the piratical Dey of Algiers, with a view to the conquest of that territory,—a scheme which was carried out during the year following.

In the mean time, despite the concessions made to Ireland, the domestic troubles of the Wellington administration continued to grow and increase. The Orange party, exasperated to the utmost by the triumph of their Catholic opponents, displayed in every possible way their bitter hatred of Catholic equality, and the result was a series of collisions in which many lives were lost, and insurrectionary movements which, in Tipperary and elsewhere, induced the magistrates to apply for the renewal or extension of that terrible act generally known as the Insurrection Act. In England, discontent, though less violent in its manifestations, was becoming as widely spread. The calling in of the smaller paper, for the second time, was now nearly effected; and although grain, owing to a bad harvest, did not fall in price so decisively as in 1822–3, yet trade and manufactures felt and showed the enormous pressure deeply and plainly. In the manufacturing districts of the north, and in the midland counties, the distress became intolerable. For fancy-articles the want of demand was so great that

the hand-loom weavers were reduced to the lowest stage of misery; and, in Huddersfield, it was proved by a committee of relief, that great numbers of families were brought down to 2½d. for each individual *per diem;* out of which food, clothing, fuel, and lodging were to be provided.

This extremity of pressure, to which the people were as yet unused, soon manifested itself in audible complaints; and a public meeting, in order to remonstrate with the legislature, was held at Birmingham, under the auspices of the Birmingham Union, now a powerful body with numerous ramifications in the midland counties. This petition was presented on the 4th of June, and gave rise to an important debate. Mr Brougham, to whom, for some reason or other, the petition had been intrusted, set himself to work, when he presented it, to discredit its statements, in the course of which he exposed only his own confused notions of the whole question. The petitioners stated, and truly stated, that, taking into account the operation of the sinking fund which bought up millions of the old debt whilst new was creating, the whole debt was really borrowed in a money depreciated on the average *fifty per cent.*, the nominal pound being really worth only ten standard shillings. By the act of 1819 the current pound was now again being made worth twenty standard shillings; and thus, as the petitioners asserted, the taxes were *doubled*; men now paying *twenty* shillings where they before paid *ten.* This clear statement Mr Brougham could not understand.

"The petitioners (said the learned gentleman) gave a measure of the depreciation which, he confessed, he did not clearly comprehend; for they said it amounted to *fifty per cent.*, but in the illustration they made it *one hundred per cent.*, by asserting that the effect was to *double* the debt of 800 millions as well as the fifty-five millions of taxes which the public had to pay."

Thus, it seems Mr Brougham could not see that, whilst to take ten shillings of value from twenty is a depreciation of only *fifty per cent.*, the addition of ten shillings to ten shillings is *a doubling* of the smaller sum. He then reverted to the twenty times exploded blunder of the price of gold being a measure of the actual depreciation during years when it was proved by the bullion-brokers that no one knew nor could say what the price of gold really was as compared with the paper currency; and after a few more observations, equally rambling and worthless, sat down. He was followed by Mr Benett, Mr Hudson Gurney, and Mr alderman Waithman, all of whom agreed with the petitioners that the act of 1819, by causing the most monstrous fiscal injustice on record, was the sole cause of the distress; and Mr Matthias Attwood, after exploding again the often refuted blunder that the price of gold was any measure of the depreciation, went on to say, "Was it possible that the House of Commons could admit of a state of things like that remaining without investigation or redress, without examining into the extent, the necessity, and the justice of this additional levy of taxes, and into their appropriation? This surreptitious taxation had gone

to the extent, whatever that was, to which depreciation had been carried; and whilst that depreciation was admitted by all, and was estimated by some at five and by others at *fifty per cent.*, no member would assert that it was fit for the House to rest satisfied without first determining the extent of depreciation, and next proceeding to redress the evil."

These observations at length called up Mr Peel, who, admitting the great extent to which depreciation had gone, attempted to defend the Act of 1819 by a subterfuge. "An equitable adjustment was at that time proposed (Mr Peel admitted), and it was proposed accordingly that the public creditor with whom a debt had been contracted in a depreciated paper currency should, upon our returning to a metallic currency, be paid only in proportion to the value of the paper currency in which the debt had been contracted (hear, hear, hear!) The first and great objection was, that it would be impossible to discover the *original creditor*." The plain and obvious reply to this is, that persons dealing in securities notoriously of fluctuating and uncertain value, must take them with all their contingencies. Buying government paper-securities is equivalent to buying book-debts, in which the purchaser either knows or ought to know that he buys an uncertain and contingent value, and takes the risk with the chance of gain. After a few observations, not very pertinent, by Mr Baring, the petition was laid upon the table.

The remainder of this one of the stormiest sessions of modern times presented little business of impor-

tance; and it was brought to a conclusion on the 24th June 1829; leaving Ireland still torn by revengeful and ever-contending factions; and England writhing under a growing commercial and agricultural pressure, with riot and outrage in many of the manufacturing counties, and with the people verging on to that state of deep suffering and consequent exasperation when revolt and insurrection are only prevented by the presence of military force.

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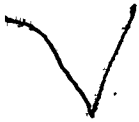

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